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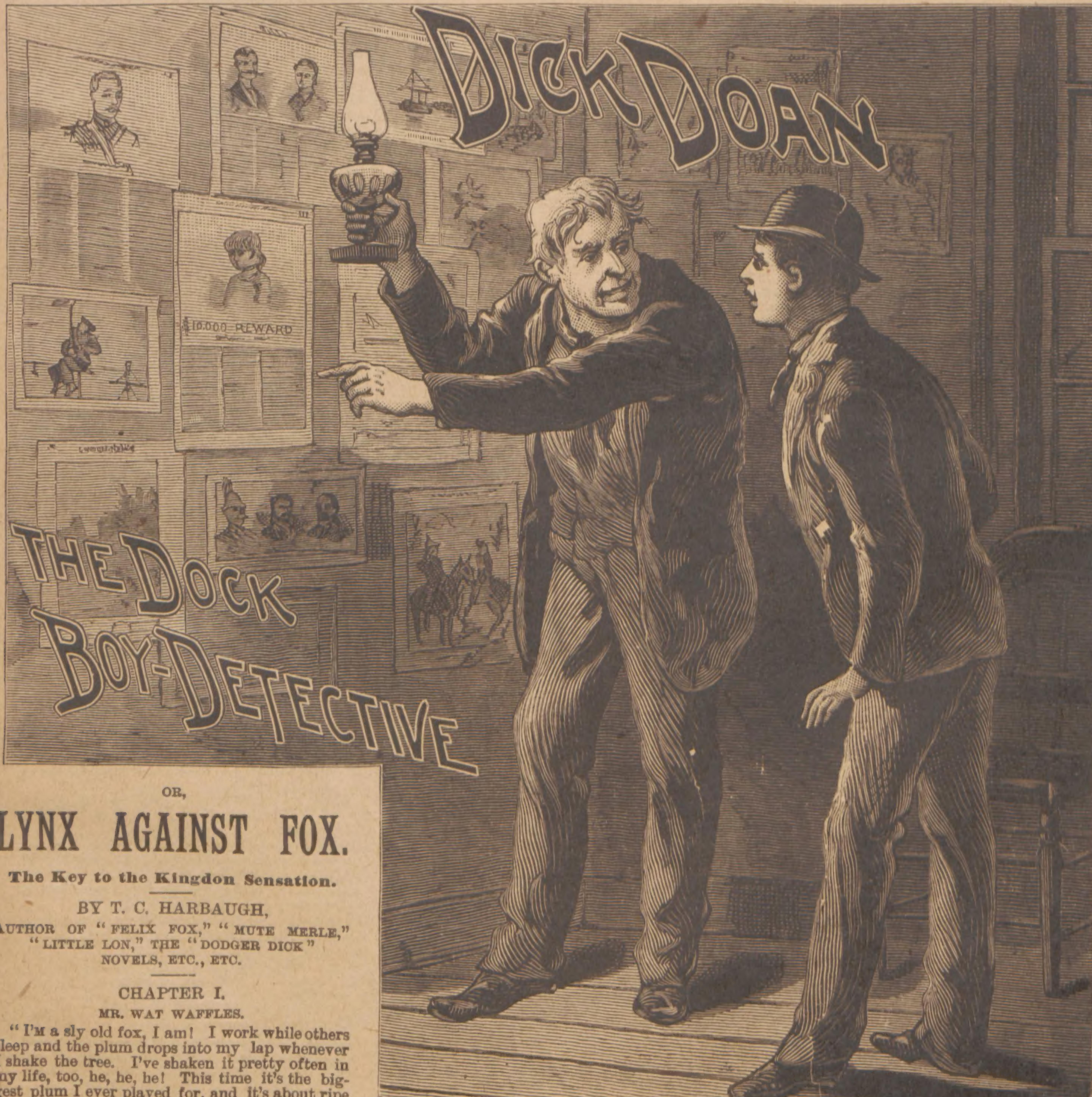
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OR, LYNX AGAINST FOX.

The Key to the Kingdom Sensation.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH,
AUTHOR OF "FELIX FOX," "MUTE MERLE,"
"LITTLE LON," THE "DODGER DICK"
NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

MR. WAT WAFFLES.

"I'M a sly old fox, I am! I work while others sleep and the plum drops into my lap whenever I shake the tree. I've shaken it pretty often in my life, too, he, he, he! This time it's the biggest plum I ever played for, and it's about ripe enough to drop. When they get ahead of Wat Waffles they are too cute to live."

"HERE IS THE CHILD NOW," AND A SKELETON-LIKE FINGER POINTED TO ONE OF THE PORTRAITS REVEALED BY THE LAMP.

One would think that the above words were addressed to some one, but the speaker was alone in a little eight-by-ten room and the lamp on the table showed its plain and scanty appointments.

There was a bed lounge in one corner besides three chairs, a cupboard with a cracked door and the table already mentioned.

The floor was covered with strips of well used matting for holes were numerous, and across the dingy ceiling the tireless spider had thrown his wonderful cables.

The man who called himself a sly old fox was on the shady side of forty. He filled the chair which he occupied and the heavy spectacles that sat astride of his large nose did not conceal the cunning twinkle of a pair of restless eyes. He was smooth-faced and rather dark of skin, and his hair which was black enough without the help of dyes was inclined to curl and stick close to his head. He wore a salt-and-pepper suit which did not fit his figure with a great amount of grace, but the sly old fox was not posing as a beau, just then.

"It's time for the boy to be here," continued the man; his voice was rather coarse, and not very pleasant to listen to. "By Jove! he knows better than to play on the road. There ought to be a letter in the box by this time. I'm not appearing in this matter. Oh, no! I am 'Business' to him just now; but, at the same time, I'm Wat Waffles, the man who always takes care of number one."

He had barely supplemented his last observation with another chuckle, when the sound of footsteps caused him to look toward the only door the room contained.

"He is here at last!" said Waffles, as the door opened, showing the face and figure of a youth of seventeen, who took a letter from his bosom as he came forward.

"It was there, eh?" grinned the man, putting out his hand for the letter, which was addressed to "Business," in care of a certain prominent newspaper of New York.

The boy smiled and bowed in return, after which he deposited his hat upon the table, and took a cigarette from a pocket-case.

Mr. Wat Waffles grew nervous over the letter, as he broke the seal, and drew forth a half sheet of paper.

"It isn't very long," said he, glancing at the boy. "But, it's the very one we want, Tony."

"I'm glad of that," was the answer.

"Of course you are. We are sly foxes, eh, boy? I'm the oldest, and therefore the slyest; but you're not slow."

"Not very," laughed the young smoker.

Wat Waffles returned to the letter, which, when he had properly adjusted his spectacles, he read as follows, first to himself, then aloud to his companion:

"No. 888 K—street.

"BUSINESS:—

"DEAR SIR:—If you are a man of veracity, and actually find yourself in possession of the intelligence hinted at in your personal in this morning's *Herald*, you will confer a favor upon the writer by saying when and where a personal interview can be had. The sooner the better.

"Yours truly,

"CARLOS KINGDON."

"The last sentence suits us exactly!" exclaimed Mr. Waffles. "Of course the sooner the better. I thought the bait would catch the game, Tony. I will proceed at once to confer the favor sought."

"Will you trust your answer to the slowness of the mails?"

"Of course not. You will take it up to the goose from which we are going to squeeze the golden egg."

"He might recognize me."

"By Jupiter! it would be a powerful tribute to our cunning if he did; but, I'll see that he does nothing of the kind. You won't be a second at the door."

"Oh, I'll go, of course, only I don't want to appear in the game just yet."

Wat Waffles took writing materials from a drawer in the table and in a short time he had peened this reply:

"CARLOS KINGDON:—

"DEAR SIR:—In reply to your letter I name eight o'clock to-morrow night and your office, down town, for the interview desired.

"BUSINESS."

Waffles sealed this brief note and intrusted it to the boy with a chuckle:

"The sly old fox is gilding his cave!" he laughed when he found himself alone once more. "This is the right sort of a game. No partners and nobody to dictate. I make all the moves on my own judgment, and I take all the praise. Blame there is to be none. The boy has his part to a 'T'—knows just what he is to do and how

to do it. I didn't make the move that brought this letter until I had everything ready for it. Carlos Kingdon will fall into the net the moment I spread it before him. When they catch Wat Waffles asleep they must stay up all night."

About an hour later the boy came back. His face was aglow with success, and he entered the room with an air of triumph.

"Who opened the door?" eagerly inquired Waffles.

"A tall young fellow."

"That's Boston. You'll get acquainted with him before long. What did he say?"

"I didn't give him a chance to say anything. I handed him the letter and bolted."

"You'll do!" exclaimed Waffles, looking proudly at the youth at the other side of the table. "By Jupiter! if you and I had been fortunate enough to live a good many years ago I'd have played you for the Lost Dauphin and won a throne. I'm fox enough to have played just such a hand with success; but, never mind. Here's a golden plum big enough to buy a throne almost about to drop into our lap. You don't doubt success now, eh, Tony?"

"No!" said the boy quickly.

Wat Waffles leaned back in his chair and studied his young companion for several moments.

"You didn't see anything of the girl, I suppose?" he resumed.

"Nothing."

"But you caught a glimpse of her in the Park the other day?"

"I did."

"She's pretty, eh?"

"Very pretty."

"Are you going to fall in love with her?"

"I don't know," laughed the boy.

"I think you will," returned Waffles. "Carlos Kingdon adopted her the same year he lost his child."

"Who was she?"

"I haven't traced her line, but there's time enough for that. She's good stock though, for a man like Kingdon isn't going to have poor blood about him."

"How about me?" asked Tony, blowing a lot of smoke above his head.

"He won't object to his own blood! Of course not," was the answer accompanied by a meaning grin. "You must be prepared for several swell ovations. Carlos Kingdon will make a great deal of the heir who has been missing fourteen years, and who was restored to him by Mr. Wat Waffles, the sly old fox of Gotham, though I won't appear on the bills in that character. I should say not. To-morrow night I'll give Mr. Carlos Kingdon just enough to whet his appetite for more. He has been imposed upon by sharpers of both sexes; they had led him out upon many a wild-goose chase, and he is a little wary. He has never believed that his child is dead, although hope has almost left his breast many times."

"You won't go to him as Wat Waffles, will you?" queried Tony glancing from the rough-looking face to the ill-fitting clothes worn by the portly schemer.

"Of course not. I'll get new gear from head to foot to-morrow, for Carlos Kingdon might not receive the boy who came home with a poor looking devil like me."

Tony laughed.

"When I get in the house I'll keep you in fine feathers!" said he.

"No fears of that!" was the prompt response. "As the heir of one of the richest brokers of New York, you will be able to get me new plumes whenever I take a notion for them. I can become a gentleman on short notice, for Wat Waffles is fox enough to lose his identity in a manner calculated to baffle the shrewdest detective in the world. You've seen my lightning changes, Tony, and you know I'm not talking nonsense."

For some minutes longer the tenants of the little room talked in a strain similar to the one to which we have listened. Wat Waffles took occasion to refer several times to the fact that he was a "sly old fox," and each time the boy confirmed the remark with a nod.

"I'm going across the river now," suddenly said Wat, taking his hat from a peg within reach. "You can sit up and smoke as long as you like. You know where the bed is when you want it. Our sly little game is bearing fruit at last, and by this time to-morrow night I'll be pushing you toward the biggest fortune out of doors. I'll come back in the morning and we'll lay the last wires together. Good-night, Mr. Kingdon! By Jupiter!" I like the sound of that!" And the door shutting on the figure of Mr. Waffles, left the boy alone in the room.

"Rake Gotham with a fine-tooth comb—Hunt

high and low in shadow and sunshine, and find a slyer old fox than Wat Waffles if you can!"

These words and a laugh were heard on the lighted street below the room, and the man from whose lips they fell hurried toward the river to catch the boat that was to carry him to new scenes.

He felt that the prize of his great game was within his grasp.

CHAPTER II.

DICK.

It did not take Mr. Wat Waffles long to reach the ferry where he found a boat about ready to put off.

A moment later he was moving across the river to the myriad lights of Jersey City. He attracted no more attention apparently than any other of the hundred passengers by whom he was surrounded.

Going forward where he could enjoy the pleasant breeze that played upon the waters, he leaned against the end of the cabin and lit a cigar.

He did not notice that a few feet away stood a boy who appeared to have discovered something interesting in him.

Rather poorly dressed in clothes that bore marks of pretty rough usage, the youngster exhibited a pair of bright, keen eyes under the brim of a tattered straw hat.

Perhaps he envied Mr. Waffles the enjoyment he seemed to be getting out of the cigar, for he looked like a boy who liked the weed himself. At any rate he made the man a profound study and did not notice the progress the ferry was making toward its destination.

"You're a cute one, I think," murmured the boy at length. "You come over a good many times in a week and always alone, too. Didn't I see you the other day in Jersey in different feathers? I hardly knew you at first, but your manner of smoking a cigar gave you away! Going down to Mother Scammon's again, eh. It's the same old trail I know, but this may be the night for me to make a discovery."

If Wat Waffles could have heard these mental observations he might have turned from the scenes before him to another not so distant.

The watchful boy was a character well-known among the waterways of New York.

Dick o' the Docks as he was popularly known to the police—though Doan was his real name—picked up a peculiar living among the piers and shipping. Owning a boat he was almost constantly on the water gathering in articles that had fallen overboard from the piers and docks or from the countess vessels of different kinds and, when he could, restoring them to their owners and taking the rewards offered for the service.

Every now and then he found things of considerable value which he had been obliged to turn over to the police for want of an owner, and when they could not be restored to their proper person they were sold and a part of the sale money handed to the honest river-scavenger.

Dick was shrewd, agile and perfectly trusty, and though seen oftenest plying his vocation on the water, he knew the streets of New York and her sister cities almost as well as he knew the piers and docks.

Nobody ever seemed to interest themselves in the lad enough to discover where he lived when not in his boat, the Lady Skimmer. When he was wanted he was to be found in or about the slip from which Wat Waffles took the ferry, and this is how he came to see the schemer on this particular night.

When the ferry-boat glided into its slip, on the Jersey side, Waffles threw aside his cigar and made haste to go on his way.

He seemed to be in a hurry, as if he had lost time, and Dick Doan laughed to himself when he saw the fellow's actions.

"Even if you give me the slip, I know where to pick you up again," exclaimed the boy, who had followed Waffles, keeping track of him as he passed through the ferry-house and came out on the street beyond.

For a little while the portly man seemed to stand undecided, but, when he started off again, he had Dick at his heels, as it were, and, a few minutes later, he dodged into a dark and quiet street, immediately disappearing.

"Back to the same old den, like the fox that you are," chuckled the shadow that slipped out of view in the identical place where Wat Waffles had vanished. "I suppose I'll have to go back to my old post, though I may not discover anything new for my trouble."

An alley of narrow dimensions ran along the

side of a certain house, and, several minutes after, Dick was crawling across a sloping roof toward a small window, scarcely large enough when open to have admitted his body.

The window consisted of but one sash, which slid up behind the weatherboarding, and when the boy spy had raised it—a feat which he accomplished without difficulty or noise—he dropped into the house and stood for a while in the darkness there.

"He has come, and I thought you wouldn't be very far behind," said a voice at the boy's elbow, and at the same time a hand found his arm.

"So he is here, Mollie?"

"Yes."

"In the room below?"

"Nowhere else."

"I'm getting kind o' tired of this," whispered Dick. "Here I've followed him, off and on, more than two months, and what have I discovered? He ain't a burglar, nor a murderer, nor a forger."

"No; but he's a rogue, all the same."

"Anybody who sees him in consultation with Mother Scammon knows that. He has a companion across the river."

"The boy?"

"Yes. The two are very thick, and my head for it, Mollie, there's something bad afoot."

"The boy, whoever he is, never comes here."

"Of course not."

"Is he a good-looking boy?"

"He is. I watched him on the Battery a long time the other day. He likes to find a shady place and there enjoy a cigar. Wat Waffles, as he calls himself sometimes and in some places, is playing the boy for something. But let me look at the pair in confab. This visit may not be as useless as the others have been."

The girl called Mollie, who was about sixteen and good-looking, led Dick o' the Docks into a room as dark as the hall that ran past the window. Stooping over the floor, she found a movable block of wood, the removal of which gave the boy a view of the room beneath.

In a moment Dick o' the Docks had one eye at the opening.

The ceiling of the room was not high, and the hole through which he looked was too small to be detected by a mere roving eye.

Dick saw two persons seated at a table.

One was Wat Waffles, the other a woman past fifty, with a dark face and restless eyes, piercing and eagle-like.

The young spy watched the scene for some minutes before he saw a move of any kind or heard a voice.

"I'm going to bring it to a close," then suddenly exclaimed Waffles.

"You are, eh? You've said that a good many times," was the answer, accompanied by a derisive smile.

"You don't give me time. You want everything to be done at once."

"At once!" echoed the woman. "I think I've waited on you a long time. You come here pretty often, and always with the same old story. I'd like to see some proof that you're nearer the prize now than you were a month ago."

"I've got it right here!" rejoined Waffles, triumphantly touching his breast.

"I don't believe it."

The man opened his coat and drew forth a leather pocketbook, from which he took a piece of paper.

Before he handed it to the anxious woman, he tore off two pieces, one at the top and the other at the bottom.

It was evident from her look that Mother Scammon did not like this, but she said nothing.

When he had mutilated the paper in the manner just mentioned, Wat pushed it across the table and saw it eagerly snatched up by his companion who occupied a position directly beneath the hole at which Dick kept his sharp eye.

Though he was some distance above the table, Dick discovered that the writing on the paper was in large characters and jet-black ink, and he read with Mother Scammon the letter received by Wat Waffles from Carlos Kingdon the broker.

"What do you think?" queried Wat, when the woman had finished reading the reply to the *Herald*, "personal" signed "Business."

"One could twist that into a good many meanings," was the response. "As you have relieved the paper of the signature, how am I to tell what it is worth?"

This adroit attempt to capture the name in Wat's hand did not succeed. He held fast to it

and soon afterward transferred the three slips back to the pocketbook.

"When are you going to capture the prize? That's what I want to know," said Mother Scammon.

"Pretty soon, I told you."

"That may mean next year."

"You are in a hurry."

"I am. I have waited long enough."

"Well, all I have to say, you may have to wait a little longer."

A scowl came over the woman's face—a flash of rage appeared in her eyes.

She pushed her chair back and stood up.

"I may not be at your mercy as much as you think," cried she, looking madly across the table. "You don't put any confidence in me or you would not have mutilated the letter."

"That's a fact!" laughed Wat Waffles. "If you can't trust me and have patience, you shan't finger a dollar of the swag. There!"

Mother Scammon's face from dark seemed to turn white. Dick saw her control her ire and come back to the chair.

"It is just as I've often told you, Mollie," said he, rising and finding a hand in the darkness. "Mother Scammon is in the grip of the scoundrel down there!"

CHAPTER III.

DICK STRIKES A TRAIL.

ABOUT an hour after these events a boy, whose figure made a grotesque shadow on the wall of a dingy-looking room, as thrown there by a sickly-looking candle on a rickety table, was scanning the advertising columns of a paper of current date.

Dick o' the Docks was no longer in the dark room in Jersey City, but he it was who was the sole occupant of the apartment just mentioned, with the newspaper on his lap.

"Here it is!" exclaimed the boy aloud, and then he read the following "personal," in tones which, while intended for himself, could have been heard anywhere in the room:

"Lost Boy.—If the gentleman who lost a child fourteen years ago, will seek an interview with 'Business,' he may pick up a bit of good news. Address 'Business,' this office."

Dick Doan seemed to reread the advertisement, though to himself, before he looked up from the paper or laid it aside.

"I saw that the letter which Wat Waffles showed to Mother Scammon had been addressed to some one who hides behind the word 'Business,' and here is the personal which called it forth," resumed Dick. "Now, what I want to know is, who lost a boy fourteen years ago? I don't know anything about the circumstances myself, for then I was a gutter-snipe. Maybe I can pick up some information from Pappy Powder. What he doesn't know about crime's doings isn't worth finding out. I'll try him, at any rate."

The shadow of the docks blew out the candle and left the place. He was within a stone's throw of the river, and not once during his journey to the spot he had decided to visit did he get beyond these bounds.

After awhile, by descending a flight of dark steps, he was admitted into a forbidding-looking place, where he saw the unnaturally bright eyes of a little old man, whose skin was almost as black as a mummy's.

"Come in, Shrimp!" exclaimed the door-keeper, while he held the door ajar long enough to let Dick slip inside. "I've been wishing for some one to talk to, and you're always company, though you don't come often, nor stay very long."

By this time the boy was in a room some distance from the door, and Pappy Powder had handed him a chair, which threatened to fall to pieces the moment he should take it. But Dick took the risk, and sat down.

The room itself was a veritable picture-gallery. The walls were covered with a conglomerated mass of illustrations, cut from the pictorial papers of the day.

The hands of the little man had arranged them with an eye to order. On one side were to be seen portraits of missing people, kidnapping scenes and the like, and in other places were fanciful sketches of other crimes.

Dick had seen the pictures many times before, but on this occasion some of them seemed to possess new interest.

"Say, Pappy Powder," began the boy, at the same time sending a swift glance toward the "Lost People's Gallery," which look the sharp eyes of the old man detected. "What do you know about a child who disappeared about fourteen years ago?"

The question was so unexpected that Pappy Powder gave the youth a look of astonishment.

"That's going back pretty far," he replied.

"Fourteen years ago, did you say?"

"About that time."

The old man picked up the lamp, and went toward the group of illustrations furtively observed by Dick.

The young river scavenger left his chair and followed.

"Fourteen years would take us back to 1870," continued Pappy Powder, who received a nod of confirmation from Dick. "That was the very year that had the Custer Kingdom sensation."

"What was that?" eagerly asked Dick.

"What! Never heard of Broker Kingdon's lost kid?" exclaimed Pappy Powder. "I thought you had picked that up long ago. Here is the child now," and a skeleton-like finger was laid upon one of the portraits revealed by the lamp. "Under the picture you see the 'Ten Thousand Dollars Reward' which the father offered—a sum which was never paid because the child was never found."

"Give me the lamp a moment, Pappy."

The light was yielded without a word, and the next instant Dick o' the Docks was leaning forward, while he drank in, with bated breath and glowing eyes, the large reward for, and description of Custer Kingdom, the child, who had never come back to his father.

"Did they hunt high and low for the boy?" asked Dick, when he fell back to where the old man stood.

"High and low is the proper term," was the response. "They dragged New York from Spuyten Duyvil to the Battery. The whole police force kept its eyes open for more than a year, and Carlos Kingdon spent money like water, but all to no purpose. The little boy who, when last seen, was playing with some strange children—gutter-snipes, they say—a few yards from home, was as completely lost as if he had been thrown into the bay with a cannonball tied to his feet. That's him there." And Pappy Powder nodded toward the child-face on the wall. "The picture papers were full of the affair for a long time, but, like everything else, it had its day, and nobody thinks of Custer Kingdom now."

Dick o' the Docks seemed to be intensely interested in the old man's remarks.

"How old would Custer be if he were alive?" he asked.

"Pretty close to his eighteenth year," replied Pappy Powder. "But you don't think he's living—eh, Shrimp?"

"Shrimp" was a nickname which the tenant of the hovel had bestowed upon Dick on account of his life among the docks.

"Nobody is dead to me until I know it," answered the boy.

"That is what Carlos Kingdon used to say, though of late years I guess he's given up the idea."

Dick drew from his bosom the newspaper which he had consulted by the light of his candle.

"What does that mean?" he went on, pointing to the advertisement signed "Business," then watched Pappy Powder's face while he read.

"Another bleeder trying to sink his lance into Carlos Kingdon's purse," was the prompt response. "They did it a great deal at first, and the broker responded liberally, but of late years I have not heard of any of their work. But I see that the leeches ain't all dead."

The boy could not repress a smile.

"Don't you think 'Business' knows anything about the lost boy?" queried Dick.

"No more than you or I, Shrimp," laughed Pappy Powder. "Run 'Business' down, and you will find a rogue of the first water. His game is too old."

"Not if Carlos Kingdon has not given up all hopes of seeing his son alive."

"I think he has. Besides, a "personal" isn't going to draw him into the net of a bleeder. Of course," added Pappy Powder, "he would be willing to give every dollar of his fortune, and it is immense, for the missing boy, but my word for it, that "Business" won't catch him with the sort of chaff he has thrown before him."

"There is to be an interview."

The eyes of the little old man seemed to dilate suddenly with excitement.

"How do you know?" he exclaimed grasping the boy's arm.

"Never mind. I tell you, Pappy Powder, that Carlos Kingdon has answered that notice."

"The more fool he!" cried the old fellow. "If fourteen years of silence have not taught him discretion let the leech suck him dry!"

There was a good deal of bitterness in Pappy Powder's tones now.

"But that would not be right," quickly put in Dick. "Because Carlos Kingdon clings to a hope that the little boy who disappeared many years ago may be living is no reason why he should be bled by a cunning rascal."

"You're right, Shrimp; I'll take it all back," rejoined the tenant of the basement lair. "The truth is I don't like rich people. Carlos Kingdon once pushed me out of his way when I had as much right to the sidewalk as he. But, you're right, Shrimp; yes, you are. The man who put that catch-bait in the paper ought to be behind bars, but he's sleek enough not to get there, and there's many more like him in this big city."

"Thousands of them. I see them every night," answered Dick. "I run across 'em among the docks and elsewhere. It seems to me I can tell 'em by a brand some unseen hand has put on their brows. But, where does Carlos Kingdon live?"

"You'll have to go to the Directory for that," answered Pappy. "I believe he sold his home several years after Custer disappeared. He still keeps a down-town office, for he is making money hand over fist—filling up the gaps the detectives and the bleeders made while the crime was fresh in the public mind."

"I don't want to see anybody robbed, and Carlos Kingdon shall not be lanced by this scoundrel if I can help it."

"You?" grinned the dweller in the den, and then he drew off and laughed until Dick flushed; "I'd like to know how *you're* going to prevent it, Shrimp. It will be safer for you to go back and stick to your business among the docks. You don't know anything about 'Business' in the first place—"

"Don't I?" broke in Dick, retreating toward the door. "There's where you fool yourself, Pappy! I know something about 'Business,' or Wat Waffles, and I'll increase that knowledge before I'm through with him, or lose my head!"

At mention of the name "Wat Waffles," Pappy Powder uttered a singular cry and bounded forward to restrain the boy, but he was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

A STROKE OF BAD LUCK.

LAUGHING at Pappy Powder's outburst of surprise and curiosity Dick Doan ran down the street and disappeared before the tenant of the picture gallery could sight him with his searching eyes.

"I didn't lose anything by giving the old man a call," murmured Dick. "Carlos Kingdon the broker is the man who replied to Wat Waffles's notice in the newspaper. At least he is the parent who lost the little boy fourteen years ago, and whom this shrewd scamp is going to bleed. Wat may know something about the kidnapping, but I'm pretty sure that he knows nothing at all concerning the present whereabouts of the lost heir. I won't disturb the broker to-night, but early to-morrow I'll put a bug in his ear at his office. Back to duty now."

A few minutes afterward Dick o' the Docks was patrolling his old stamping-ground in the Lady Skinner as keenly on the lookout as ever for the harvest of the waves.

His thoughts, however, still clung to the events of which he had been a part, and while he sent his craft hither and thither, he tried to make plain the mysterious connection that existed between Wat Waffles and Mother Scammon, the guardian of the girl Mollie.

All at once there came to the dock scavenger's ears a cry that almost tore the oars from his hands.

It came from toward the middle of the river and in the path of the ferry.

The boy leaned forward and looked intently for a moment, then he sent his boat toward the spot pulling with all his might.

It was not long before he caught sight of a boat about as large as the Skinner pulling rapidly down-stream and almost at the same time he saw a living object struggling in the water straight ahead.

Leaving the disappearing boat to take care of itself Dick made a dash for the object in the water.

He saw nothing else but it, and as he came alongside he caught sight of a girlish face about to sink beneath the surface.

Dropping the oars in the excitement of the moment Dick o' the Docks leaned over and caught the white garment that offered itself. He did not heed the ferry that was bearing down upon him; his whole mind was set on the rescue before him.

It required all of Dick's strength to drag the

drowning girl from the water and in doing so the Lady Skinner was nearly capsized, but with the hold he had on the poor creature the boy was resolved not to let go if he was precipitated into the river.

Just as he deposited the half-dead girl in his boat, he realized his own danger, for, attracted by sounds the purport of which he knew so well, he looked up to find himself in the shadow of the puffing ferry steamer!

The ponderous craft freighted with humanity was bearing down upon him with the fury of a water monster. In another moment he would be struck and killed along with the unfortunate creature he had just rescued from the toils of the river.

In an instant Dick uttered a loud cry of alarm in hopes of attracting the attention of those on board the ferry and at the same time he attempted to back off in hopes of avoiding the threatened collision.

His efforts were put forth too late.

The noise of the approaching boat, the roar of the boiling waters drowned his shout and before he could fairly grip the oars he felt a stroke that seemed to shiver every plank in the Skinner and the following second he was struggling in the river!

Dick thought he heard a chorus of horrified cries and saw a number of forms rush excitedly to the chains, then as a wave larger than any of the rest seemed to engulf him, everything became dark and he knew no more.

The pilot of the ferry-boat, one of the best of the many who ply their avocation between the cities, saw the boy of the docks, but not in time to sound the usual alarm.

He tried, however, to turn the steamer from the line it was making, but before it could answer his touch he saw the Lady Skinner and her occupants disappear as if the waters had sucked them down.

The ferry was brought to as soon as possible, but not without the protests of a dozen passengers, who did not care for any lives but their own. The boat was backed to the scene of disaster, and everybody strained their eyes to catch sight of the victims of the mishap.

"There's your game!" exclaimed a young man, pointing to something on the water, and a moment later a long pole with a hook at one end was thrown out and the object designated secured.

It turned out to be Dick himself, and when he was lifted on board a cry went up that he was dead.

"There were two of them," persisted a passenger. "I saw them just before we let 'em have it. But I don't see the other now."

Dick was taken forward and turned over to a doctor who happened to be on board, while further search was made for the girl.

The longer the search lasted the more the people growled, and at last it was given up and the ferry proceeded on its way.

Not long afterward, Dick o' the Docks found himself in a strange place. He lay on a narrow bed in the midst of a dim light, and not a sound of any kind came to his ears.

For a long time he could not think where he was, but gradually the adventure in the river came to him, and he lived over the collision with the puffing craft.

By and by he felt himself sinking into fathomless darkness as it were, and though he struggled bravely and tried to cry out, he was overcome and all was oblivion again.

At last he saw a light which he knew was the beams of another day. Then he could see a number of little beds like his own, and the thought flashed across his mind that he was in a hospital.

"You've pulled through," said a cheery voice, as a man came up and looked down at him. "We thought you weren't going to make it, but pluck won the battle."

Dick smiled in reply and watched the ward surgeon a few moments in silence.

"I was unlucky last night," said the boy at last.

"Last night?" echoed the doctor, with another smile. "This is Saturday. Your accident happened Wednesday night."

This piece of information nearly took Dick with a bound from the cot. He thought of Wat Waffles and his schemes; he recalled the "personal" in the newspaper, the answer which he had read through the peep-hole in Mother Scammon's ceiling, and the interview at which the man of mystery intended to play his hand.

These thoughts filled and alarmed the boy.

"I am going away from here. I must go," he said to the doctor.

"Certainly, but you want to keep away from

the ferries," was the reply. "They found your companion yesterday, or at least a person supposed to be her."

"Who is she?"

"No one knows."

"I'm very sorry," rejoined Dick. "If the boat had not rushed down upon me I would have brought her ashore safely. I was doing all I could for her, but the ferry spoiled it all. And some other business, too," he added, with a sigh.

It was past high noon when the young scavenger of the docks climbed the stairs to the little room from which he had been absent many hours.

He saw at once that it had been visited, for the candlestick on the table held down a letter which he opened and read with breathless avidity.

"DEAR DICK:—" he read. "Wat Waffles and Mother Scammon have had several interviews since you were over last. Something has happened greatly to their interest, for the fellow has a suit of new clothes, real broadcloth, and all the money he wants, and Mother Scammon says she is going to be as rich as anybody by and by. The scheme, whatever it is, must have succeeded. Last night Mr. Waffles exhibited a paper which contained a long article which they read together and laughed over as if it pleased them. I wish you could have seen their antics. I tried to get hold of the paper after Mother Scammon had gone to bed, but she had put it beyond my reach."

"I don't know what has become of you. I have crossed the river twice in hopes of finding you, but you are strangely absent. I shall leave this letter for you if I don't find you to day. Try to find out what has happened to put the precious pair in such high feather. I am afraid they have imposed upon some one to their mutual advantage. I will be over again to-night if I can get away. MOLLIE."

"If all this is true, and Mollie is an observing girl, something has happened!" exclaimed Dick. "Can it be that the plot against Carlos Kingdon has succeeded? If not why does Mother Scammon boast that she will soon have all the money she wants? I know where I can get hold of the paper that pleased 'the precious pair' as Mollie calls them." And biding the letter in his bosom he rushed out and vanished.

Ten minutes later Dick o' the Docks entered a very smoky and somewhat dingy room where a number of papers were arranged for reading on wooden rocks along the walls.

The place was a so-called reading-room attached to a large saloon on the wharf.

The boy walked straight to one of the files and began his task.

"Great heavens! the card has been successfully played!" he suddenly exclaimed, and then his eyes dwelt on the following head-lines at the top of a column:

AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS!

A Mystery Solved at Last!

CARLOS KINGDON, ESQ., FINDS HIS SON!"

Dick's brain seemed to swim, the air in the room almost choked him.

He kept his post until he read the particulars concerning the return of long-lost Custer Kingdon. The florid account said that the boy, now a handsome youth of seventeen, had been fully recognized, that the man who had been the means of solving the secret—a gentleman named Betts—had been on the trail a long time, that he had first communicated with the broker through a "personal" signed "Business," and so forth.

"It is too true!" exclaimed the boy. "The villainous plot has succeeded, but, as my name is Dick o' the Docks! it shall never bear the fruit Wat Waffles expects to eat!"

CHAPTR V.

DICK IS "MARKED."

THE success of the plot against Carlos Kingdon, the broker, did not quit Dick Doan's thoughts for a moment.

Mollie's letter had prepared him for the worst, but for all that the cold announcement in the newspaper was a startling surprise.

From the dingy reading-room he went up to Carlos Kingdon's house, hoping to catch sight of the boy who had been received as lost Custer, but fortune did not seem disposed to favor him.

"Wat Waffles is a shrewd rascal," said Dick to himself. "A man of his ilk will do anything before losing the price of the prize of the game. I would like to know what sort of proof he used to catch the broker. No doubt he has been laying his ropes a long time and knows just what he is about. He didn't go to Kingdon as Wat Waffles. Oh, no! He masquerades under the name of Betts. I've got my hands full, for if

the broker really believes that the boy in his house is his son it will take tough work to unmask the scoundrels."

At this moment a figure appeared in sight, and, to the alert boy detective's surprise, it mounted the steps of the Kingdon house and rung the bell.

"Mr. Waffles in his new feathers!" exclaimed Dick. "Mr. Betts I should say now. Mollie was right when she said that the bird had come out in new plumes. Waffles, rascal, transformed into Betts, gentleman! Wait till the game ends. We'll see who laughs last."

By this time the summons had been answered and the man admitted. When the door was opened Dick thought he caught a glimpse of a girlish face and figure, and for a moment he was almost tempted to run forward and expose the character of the visitor.

Not far from Kingdon's home there was one of those delightful parks that dot New York, and when the door had closed on Wat Waffles the boy of the docks took possession of a park settee from which he could see the lamplight on the steps.

From this position, while he formed one plan after another for future action, he kept an eye on the house, and the moment he saw a figure come out he bounded up and prepared to follow.

Coming close to the person who had emerged from the dwelling he found Wat Waffles as Mr. Betts in new broadcloth and armed with a cane.

Dick thought he detected a smile of satisfaction on the fellow's face and the longer he looked the surer he became that one was there.

Waffles led the young lynx to a very respectable quarter of the city where he entered a large house that contained furnished rooms for gentlemen.

"That's his nest now!" thought Dick as he surveyed the house, carefully noting the number. "The spider will weave his web from this quarter and thither he will come after his successes, but always as Mr. Betts."

Dick for a while stood before the house in a quandary.

He wanted to learn something of Wat Waffles as Mr. Betts and he hardly knew how to go about it. At length he bethought himself of Pappy Powder in his grotesque picture gallery and the next moment he was hurrying toward the old man's quarters.

He had not seen Pappy Powder since his almost fatal collision with the ferry-boat and when he surprised the little old fellow he knew that his mishap had not been reported in any way.

"I'm glad you've come!" exclaimed Pappy Powder the moment he shut the door on the boy. "You went off like a flash of powder and I've been wanting to ask you something ever since. But, first, have you heard that Custer Kingdon is home again?"

"I've seen the papers," answered Dick without delivering an opinion.

"It's all square, I guess," pursued the old man. "This Mr. Betts who restored the broker's heir has feathered his nest and no mistake. He has beaten all the detectives and we've got some shrewd chaps in that line in Gotham. But that is not what I wanted to get at."

Dick made no reply, but waited for Pappy Powder to proceed, waited with a half smile, as if he could guess what was coming.

"What do you know about Wat Waffles?" eagerly resumed the tenant of the basement home. "You let the name slip from your tongue just before you went off, and I've been between pickled and stew ever since. Now what do you know?"

"I think I ought to ask you, Pappy Powder," laughed Dick Doan.

To his surprise, the old man settled back in his chair and answered:

"Go ahead, then. I know something about a certain Wat Waffles, and I don't think there are two persons with the same name."

"What sort of a man is the one you know?"

"He used to be rather stumpy, with a good figure for all that," replied Pappy Powder. "He was always hatching up a scheme for making money, and he wasn't particular how crooked it was if he could feather his nest. That's the sort of chap *my* Wat Waffles was. When they caught him at last—"

"Ah! did they catch him at his tricks?" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes. He played too deep a game one time, and the cops nabbed him."

"What did he get?"

The old man did not reply until he had reached up among some dusty shelves overhead and taken down a dingy-looking scrap-book

"Here it is," he went on, leaning toward Dick o' the Docks while he ran his chocolate-colored finger over the page before him. "They gave him a full year up the river, and he served his time out, too."

"For what?"

"For forgery, boy; but they didn't know who they had when they were trying him."

"Did you know, Pappy Powder?"

"Didn't I!" laughed the old man. "Didn't he impersonate a wealthy woman's California brother, and line his pockets with the root of all evil? I had ceased to think of him until you mentioned his name several days ago. I'll wager my head that he hasn't forgotten his old tricks of money-getting."

"Indeed he has not. Now, Pappy Powder, what would you say if I should remark that Wat Waffles is well acquainted with the Mr. Betts who brought Custer Kingdon home?"

"With Bolivar Betts?" cried the old man. "Well, I don't let anything surprise me nowadays. I see what you are driving at. You seem to think that Wat Waffles and Bolivar Betts are one and the same person."

Dick's expression at the time these words were spoken was answer enough.

"I can't think that," continued Pappy Powder, with a shake of his head. "In the first place, Carlos Kingdon is satisfied. One account says that Mr. Betts produced a garment worn by the boy at the time of his disappearance. It was fully recognized by the father. That looks pretty strong, doesn't it?"

Dick was silent.

"Then, the boy as came home had a birthmark which Custer had, and that's another strong proof," the old man proceeded. "If you can prove that Bolivar Betts is Wat Waffles the old jail-bird and then show that he has deceived Carlos Kingdon why your name and fortune are made. You needn't skim the river for a living."

Dick Doan felt the force of Pappy Powder's words.

"I know it is a tremendous job, but I am convinced that Carlos Kingdon is the victim of one of the coolest scamps alive," he replied at length. "I am going to try to make it plain. You don't know Mother Scammon do you, Pappy Powder?"

"Never heard of her. Wat Waffles had a wife once."

"When he was sent up?"

"No, before. He told me that she died leaving him childless, but the fellow knew how to twist the truth into every conceivable shape."

"Is he dangerous?"

"Ah! I was just coming to that!" exclaimed Dick's odd acquaintance. "Criminals generally are dangerous people. Wat Waffles—the one I knew, mind you—was a cool, crafty, merciless scoundrel. If he knew that you suspected him, he would be on your track this minute. He generally worked his schemes alone, but sometimes he called in help from the right quarters. Watch him if you are going to fight him, boy. I don't want my Shrimp to feel the Waffles fingers at his throat. We're too good friends for that, you know," and Pappy Powder was smiling still when Dick said good-by and left the den.

As he ran up the steps to the sidewalk a moment later, he brushed an object that fairly startled him.

Looking back from the last step, he saw a man at the bottom hugging the wall like a spy.

There could be no mistake though the light was dim.

It was Wat Waffles!

CHAPTER VI.

FACE TO FACE.

DICK, however, passed on without showing, by any outward signs, that he had detected the man among the shadows near Pappy Powder's door.

All the time his heart was beating faster than ever, and some minutes elapsed before he regained his composure.

"The rascal suspects, and I am in for it now," mentally exclaimed the boy. "He must have followed me from the nest to which I tracked him from Carlos Kingdon's. He has gone back to his old feathers, as it would not look nice for a man dressed as well as Bolivar Betts dresses, to be seen about a den like Poppy Powder's."

Dick o' the Docks looked often behind him, as he went back to his old quarters near the docks.

He could not return to his old duty even if he had wished to, for the ferry-boat had deprived

him of the Lady Skimmer. He would have to get a new craft before he could resume his task on the waters of the docks.

When he found that he was not followed, he went straight to his room, and on entering, discovered a young girl quietly waiting for him in his arm-chair.

It was Mollie.

"I thought I would find you some time!" exclaimed Mother Scammon's ward with a smile of pleasure.

Dick was delighted to see the Jersey City girl, as there was much he wanted to say.

"I know what has been done," Mollie went on, before the boy could get started. "They have restored a lost boy to his father, and the act has brought them a great amount of money!"

"Yes, Wat Waffles and Mother Scammon have made a raise, but by the basest trickery I ever heard of."

"Of course it is a plot, but how are you going to prove it?"

Dick was silent for a moment. The girl's question evidently puzzled him.

"I did something before I left the house that wasn't very nice," continued Mollie, when the boy had remarked that the task ahead was a stupendous one.

"What was that?"

"I peeped into certain places where I was not welcome."

"Oh," laughed Dick, "I hope Mother Scammon did not catch you at work."

"Fortunately for me she did not," smiled Mollie in return. "She was absent, when I managed to open her treasury, which consists of an old-fashioned wardrobe, which, while it does not contain many clothes, holds some valuable things. There I found a lot of old newspapers, nearly fifteen years old, and some marked articles about a lost boy, with large offers of reward. On top of the pile lay a fresh paper, with a piece marked just like the rest, and when I looked I found it to be an account of Custer Kingdon's restoration to his father. All the other articles referred to the supposed abduction of a boy of that name about fifteen years ago."

"Your discovery confirms my suspicions, Mollie," said Dick. "Mother Scammon knows something about how the broker's son disappeared. She hasn't lived the most correct life, though since you've been with her she has not been known to do anything very wrong."

"I never heard of it," answered the girl. "When I saw the late paper put away with the others, I suspected the truth."

"Of course. Wat Waffles and Mother Scammon are the schemers. They have filled Carlos Kingdon's heart with joy, but I am sure that they have foisted upon him a boy in whose veins there isn't a drop of Kingdon blood."

"Why not go to the broker and expose the scheme?"

"Without proof I might be repulsed. I want some evidence first. I know that Wat Waffles or Bolivar Betts has served a term in prison; but that is not enough. If I could get a hold on the true identity of the supposed Custer Kingdon, I would have the scoundrel fast."

"I may help you out," said Mollie, taking from her pocket a package, which was found to contain several old letters, at sight of which the boy's eyes lit up with intense curiosity.

"Where did you find these, girl?" he asked.

"Where I saw the old papers. I will watch my chance and restore them before Mother Scammon discovers her loss. They speak of a boy, and as they were received some time ago, they may throw some light on the trail you are following."

Dick took the letters, three in number, and leaned toward the light.

"These are important though mysterious," he suddenly exclaimed, glancing at Mollie. "Mother Scammon or some one else got them eight years ago. Even then the writer was scheming to play a game like the one that has succeeded. He talks about the progress a certain boy is making, and says in one place that he grows more and more like the family likeness every day."

"Look at the signature," remarked Mollie.

Dick o' the Docks turned the letter over and gave utterance to a sharp cry.

"The 'Wat' of this letter is our old friend Mr. Waffles!" he exclaimed. "Now, it seems to me that a copy of these letters and ten minutes' talk with Carlos Kingdon ought to convince him that he is the victim of one of the coolest money-getting schemes of the day."

"I would think so."

"It ought to be done before the boy who has

been put upon has taken the place of the lost heir."

"Yes, that is right."

Dick went to a rickety desk and found several scraps of paper.

"We will copy these letters word for word," he went on. "When our work is done you can take the originals back to Mother Scammon's cupboard and I will see that Carlos Kingdon gets wind of the game. He sometimes does night work at his private office. I may find him there to-night. If I do he shall listen to me."

The young folks went to work and copied the three letters which seemed to prove so much in Dick's eyes. For some time they worked with all diligence and when the last sentence had been jotted down Mollie tied up the originals and transferred them to her pocket.

"Get them back without discovery," said Dick. "Mother Scammon looks like a sharp woman and she don't want the game to fail."

"I'll watch my chance," smiled Mollie and Dick bade her a cheery good-night as she went out the door.

"If this piece of luck doesn't put a block under the wheels then I'm no judge of human nature!" ejaculated the young detective of the docks. "If the man seen hugging the wall just outside of Pappy Powder's door was Wat Waffles the sooner I trump his last card the better. I must steal a march on him at once in order to prevent him from stealing one on me, for if he is dangerous, and no doubt he is, being a thorough-paced rascal, I won't receive any mercy if I fall into his hand."

Armed with the copies of the letters found by Mollie in Mother Scammon's treasury Dick Doan set out to find Carlos Kingdon in the private down-town office which he sometimes inhabited until long after sundown.

Knowing the city as he did, he was not long finding the splendid building in which a number of brokers had their offices.

Dodging into the open hallway, Dick ran up a flight of dark steps and almost collided with a man on the floor above.

"Where will I find Mr. Kingdon's office?" queried the boy, when he had apologized.

"Last door on the left, at the end of the hall," was the reply.

"Is he in?"

"Yes."

The man vanished, and Dick went forward.

Half a minute later he stood before the door designated by the stranger. It bore in modest lettering the name of Carlos Kingdon.

"Now or never," said Dick o' the Docks to himself. "If I don't get a start on this rascal, he will make me pay for my impertinence. I promised myself to expose your villainy, Wat Waffles, and I don't intend to shrink from the task at this stage."

The next second, having heard no noises beyond the door, Dick rapped gently, to hear in response a sharp voice telling him to "come in."

He turned the knob and entered.

To his surprise he found two men in the broker's office. They were seated at a table in the center of the room; the one supposed to be Kingdon the broker had his face turned toward the door, the other was not so well visible.

As Dick advanced, the broker's companion turned his head, and a thrill entered the boy's heart as he beheld the face of Wat Waffles, dressed as Bolivar Betts!

"By Jupiter! this is luck!" exclaimed the rascal, leaving his chair before Dick could address the broker. "Here is the young river imp who plays spy on gentlemen. No doubt he came to blackmail you, friend Kingdon. I'll just twist his neck a little as a reminder of what is in store if he doesn't behave himself."

These words, accompanied by a flashing look on the schemer's part, almost deprived the boy detective of the river of the power to articulate.

Before he could stir, Wat pounced upon him with the suddenness of a hawk, and in a second he felt the clutching hands of the rascal on his shoulders.

"Don't hurt him," cried Carlos Kingdon.

"I won't more than pitch him through the window!" was the response. "If I hadn't been here, he'd have spun a pretty tale for you, Kingdon."

Dick, with a superhuman effort, freed himself from the man's grip and bounded toward the table.

"That's the villain who has hoodwinked you!" he cried, covering the flushed and quivering Waffles with his finger. "It's the coolest and deepest game ever played in New York—"

"Hear the young Ananias!" broke in Waffles darting forward. "He turns on me to get

even. I'll wring his neck for him, that's what I'll do!" And again the scoundrel threw himself upon Dick, and carrying him across the room without touching the floor, hurled him headlong into the corridor.

CHAPTER VII.

UNEXPECTEDLY CAUGHT.

THE young scavenger of the harbor was dazed and considerably bruised by this rough-handed treatment. When he picked himself up some distance from the door, he saw that it was shut and that Wat Waffles had not waited to see what became of him.

Dick was at first inclined to go back and force Carlos Kingdon to grant him audience despite his visitor's interference, but second thought led him to change his mind.

"I won't do that," said the boy. "I'll get even some other time and in another way. I now realize the full force of Pappy Powder's words. Wat Waffles is dangerous. If Kingdon does not see the copies of Mother Scammon's letters to-night, another person shall."

It seemed as if the boy had but one person to seek after a rebuff of the sort he had received, and that one was the tenant of the basement picture gallery.

Leaving the occupants of the broker's office to themselves, he betook himself from the building and soon ran down Pappy Powder's steps and knocked at the door.

This time the mummified face of the little old man did not greet him and Dick, out of patience at last, opened the door himself and walked in.

The back room was silent and dark.

Twice he called Pappy Powder by name but received no answer and heard no sounds.

Then he drew a match across the nearest wall and as the blaze flashed up he fell back uttering a wild cry.

On the floor at his feet lay the diminutive figure of the strange old man.

Dick knew at once from the ghastly expression on the face that his friend was dead, and it did not take him long to discover that a terrible crime had been committed.

There were no outward signs of wounds on the old man's person, but the face was very dark and the throat was swollen.

"He had the life choked out of him," muttered the harbor lynx while he looked at the victim of crime. "I don't say who did this, but I know who I saw in the shadows when I left Pappy Powder some time ago."

Having lighted a lamp, he searched the room for the purpose of finding out whether robbery had been the motive for the murder, but so far as he could see nothing was missing.

"The harmless old man had few visitors, and the police will be staggered by the crime," continued Dick. "My opinion is that Pappy Powder knew too much for some people. He knew a good deal about Wat Waffles, and his scrapbooks contained a great deal of information concerning other folks who wear borrowed plumes instead of their own."

He drew back and soon afterward left the basement room to darkness and to the dead.

"I will manage to put the police onto the crime," thought he; "but I'll keep my ideas to myself for the present."

He did so.

Half an hour later an officer who had been rather mysteriously directed to the place went down the steps and discovered Pappy Powder dead in the center of his room.

As to Dick, he was far from the scene at the time, crossing the river toward the lights of Jersey City in a ferry-boat.

As he jumped upon the pier he was seen by a man who had been his fellow-passenger, and he had hardly reached the street ere his arm was gripped as by a vise, and a voice hissed a startling sentence at his ear:

"Not a sound if you want to breathe the air of heaven!" it said.

Dick did not have to look up to see by whom he had been caught. He had just parted from the owner of the voice, and the hand by which he was held had lately tumbled him headlong from Carlos Kingdon's office!

"Come along!" continued Wat Waffles who wore the fine clothes that made him Bolivar Betts. "I catch birds wherever I find them—on the highways and in the hedges, by day and by night. You thought you'd play a pretty game awhile ago, eh, my water swallow? You didn't expect to find me on the ground, but I'm one of the chaps who are generally on hand."

His guarded laugh was cold and merciless and

the young dock detective made no reply while he was dragged along with the fingers of his captor sinking into his flesh as it were.

"If he takes me to Mother Scammon's, Mollie may see me," thought Dick o' the Docks. "The pair won't get to hold me long after all if the girl's ingenuity and bravery can make rescue possible."

He soon discovered to his joy that he was being conducted toward Mother Scammon's house and not long after his capture he was beyond the door eyed maliciously by the partner of the schemer.

"Where did you catch him?" grinned Mother Scammon leaning toward Dick who returned her look with calmness.

"On the street. All's fish that comes to our net you know."

"Yes, yes."

"This young shrimp was working a cool lay all to himself and I thought I'd take him in."

"That was right!" cried the woman. "Did you bring him across?"

"No, I caught him here in Jersey."

The answer seemed to surprise Mother Scammon.

"What was he doing here?"

"Playing spy."

In an instant the face before Dick got a scowl of rage.

"A spy is he?" the woman cried clinching her fists until the boy heard the joints snap. "I would like to push him against the wall and choke him till his eyes jump out."

Dick was afraid for a moment that the vixen was going to carry out her threat for her mien was devilish in the extreme and a chill stole over him at thought of what her hands could do.

But she suddenly drew back and seemed to look to Wat Waffles for instructions.

"Where's the girl?" queried Wat.

"In bed an hour ago," was the reply, and Mother Scammon quickly resumed: "Oh, we've got the house and the spy to ourselves, and I could choke him without the least danger of anybody getting onto the little play."

If Mollie was asleep, there was danger of his peril not becoming known to the best friend he had in the world, but Dick questioned the accuracy of the woman's answer. Mollie might have gone to bed, but her observing eyes might be wide open and very observing at that moment. Dick hoped they were.

In a short time he was taken from the room into another. Mother Scammon led the way, while Wat followed with the same grip that had arrested him on the street.

The woman unlocked a door and ushered her followers into a small apartment entirely devoid of furniture of any sort, not even boasting of the luxury of a cot.

"What do you know?" suddenly demanded Wat Waffles, holding his prisoner at arm's length, while Mother Scammon, having locked the door, stood with the heavy key dangling from her bronzed hand.

"I know a good deal!" answered Dick, as a vivid recollection of the scene in Carlos Kingdon's office rushed across his mind.

"I told you so," said the man to Mother Scammon. "He knows altogether too much. I've caught him in places where he has no honest business and—"

"What was your business in those places?" interrupted Dick, at which the rascal with two names fell back in alarm.

"He's insolent!" flashed up the woman, suddenly exhibiting her big brown hands. "Shall I show him what I can do?"

She came toward Dick with the look of a tigress, but Wat Waffles shook his head and she stopped.

"You know a good deal, eh?" said the plotter, turning his attention to Dick again.

"I said so."

"Hear him!" snapped Mother Scammon.

"We are going to let you cool off," continued Waffles. "I warn you, however, to give us no trouble, for you are in a net that can and will hold the strongest game. I thought your departure from the office across the river would show you that I am no spring chicken, but from what I've seen since, the lesson has been of no avail. You can make yourself at home here. When we want to get at the truth, we hope we'll find you in better mood."

Dick was released so suddenly that he nearly lost his footing, and when he recovered he found himself in a room perfectly dark, with a locked door between him and the other parts of the house.

If he could have followed the well-mated pair he would have seen Mother Scammon open a

air-door, and glide up a flight of darkened steps in her stocking feet.

The woman kept on until she reached a door on the second floor. Lifting the latch of it without the least noise, she slipped across a chamber and bent over the figure of a young girl, as it lay beneath a window, in through which came the soft light of the midnight stars.

"I told 'im so," murmured Mother Scammon, drawing back from the couch. "She always drops asleep as soon as she touches the pillow. She knows nothing of the catch to-night, and our secret is safe no matter how the episode ends."

Mother Scammon left the room, and went back to the man waiting for her in the apartment down-stairs.

"It's all right," she whispered, with a smile of triumph. "The girl is sleeping like a log."

"That's good," was the answer. "Now we can make the most of our game. It is all in our hands!"

CHAPTER VIII.

MAD MEG.

FROM the moment of his return home, Custer Kingdon, as he was called, was the lion of the hour.

He was besieged by reporters who wanted to know everything about the life he had led during his absence, and his portrait was taken for the illustrated papers.

The youth was well built, good looking and intelligent, showing that his education had not been neglected, and many of those who remembered the little boy of years before, declared with the overjoyed broker that the Kingdon heir had come home.

To one and all the youth told the same story, without variation, but he would often refer his questioners to the published account, or to Bolivar Betts, the man who had discovered and restored him.

When he entered Carlos Kingdon's home, he found there the beautiful young girl whom the broker had adopted.

Clarice Kingdon, as she was called, was just budding into a bewitching womanhood. She occupied a warm place in the broker's heart, and the verdict that Custer's return would result in a love match, soon became general.

About the time of Dick Doan's mishap at Kingdon's office, Clarice, strolling through the Park near her house, saw the figure of Custer a short distance ahead.

The boy was an object of interest whenever he went out, and already a number of people were watching him while they talked in whispers to each other.

Clarice, who had not been seen, fell to watching the broker's heir, but all at once she was startled by a strange touch on her arm.

Looking around, the girl saw near her a woman not very well dressed. She had a pinched face and black eyes that fairly sparkled, and Clarice soon found herself looking into them with uncommon interest.

"That's him, is it?" asked the strange creature, glancing at Custer Kingdon, or Tony, as we have called him on another occasion.

"Do you mean Mr. Kingdon's son?"

"I mean the boy who has entered this house," was the quick retort.

"That is he," replied Clarice.

For a moment the little woman regarded the youth, with a singular smile lurking at the corners of her mouth.

"What do they say?" she suddenly exclaimed.

"Everybody seems to be satisfied."

"Ho, ho! Are you?"

"Why not?"

"I thought I'd ask, seeing how you are interested. If he had never come home, Carlos Kingdon would have given all to you."

Clarice smiled.

"I don't care for that," said she. "I want the right person to have his share."

"That's clever," laughed the woman, who was past sixty. "Do you know this Mr. Betts, who brought him back?"

"I have seen him."

"Is he handsome?"

"Not very."

"A little ungainly, isn't he, child?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

"Do you know him?"

The woman seemed to be startled by the sudden question.

"I—don't—know," she answered, slowly. "I haven't seen many people for a long time until to-day. I've just come out of a mad-house."

Clarice Kingdon recoiled from the speaker with an exclamation of fright on her lips.

"Don't go," continued the woman, plucking the girl's sleeve. "I haven't been mad because I've lived where insane people are. All those who go to mad-houses are not crazy. I think I know this Bolivar Betts."

"You?" cried the young girl.

"I—Margaret Waffles as used to be, though they've given me another name. I have been 'Mad Meg' for many years; but now I'm out in the world again, and they are looking for me. I would like to see the new heir fair in the face. A gentleman told me just before I came up that that was him over there. He's feathered his nest by coming home, and Bolivar Betts has put some gold into his own purse, too!"

Clarice made no reply.

"Where does Mr. Betts live?" continued the woman.

"I do not know."

"Does he come here often to see—the boy he brought home?"

"He drops in every day."

"What is the story he told when he presented young Custer to his father?"

The evening was pleasant in the Park and as Clarice had lost all fear of Mad Meg she invited her to one of the benches and answered her last question.

Bolivar Betts said that he accidentally ran across the boy somewhere between New York and Philadelphia. He was first attracted to him by his looks, and when the people with whom he was living said that a party of wandering Gypsies had left him near the house a good many years before, he became convinced that he was a stolen child. As Mr. Betts had heard of the missing Kingdon boy, he resolved to go deeper into the discovery. He even hunted down the head Gypsy, a man with a reputation for several things not exactly honest. At first he could get nothing from him but at last he got a confession that the gang had dropped the boy."

"Shrewd Mr. Betts!" exclaimed Mad Meg when Clarice paused.

"After this," said the girl continuing, "it took Mr. Betts several months to get another important link. He succeeded in obtaining from the hovel of a woman who had belonged to the Gypsy band a lot of old clothes such as are worn by children when very young. One of the pieces proved to be a waist which Carlos Kingdon recognized the moment he set eyes on it."

"As Custer's waist, hey?" cried the girl's auditor.

"Yes."

"That, with a peculiar birth-mark which the boy has, settled the matter, and now you know how Custer Kingdon came home."

For some time the woman remained silent. By frequent glances at her Clarice saw that she was deeply agitated, and more than once she looked at Custer Kingdon, who had left his seat and was moving slowly toward the house.

"I want to see him—just a moment!" said she. "Wait for me here, miss." And Clarice was alone, looking bewilderingly after the figure moving away.

It did not take the late occupant of the mad-house long to pass Carlos Kingdon's heir. She ran on ahead a few steps, and then came back, looking him squarely and searchingly in the face as they met.

"Are you Custer Kingdon?" she exclaimed, stopping suddenly and clutching Tony's arm in a manner that drove all color from his face.

"That's a pretty question," he answered, with an affected laugh. "If I'm not Custer Kingdon, I'd like to know who I am."

Mad Meg looked at him a second longer, then fell back with a shrill, derisive laugh, and darted away before she could be detained.

"I saw him," she exclaimed, coming back to Clarice. "It's a pretty story Bolivar Betts has told—a very pretty story."

"Don't you believe it?" queried the girl.

"Do I believe a liar?" was the answer. "Don't tell any of them what I have said, but keep your eyes open. I know Bolivar Betts. He didn't always wear the plumes he carries now. Don't let them hoodwink you, girl. Ah! don't ask me any more questions. I can't stop too long. They will be looking for Mad Meg." And without another word the strange creature darted away, leaving Clarice on the bench like a person in a maze.

Mad Meg disappeared in a jiffy, and when she had recovered from the adventure Clarice arose and went home.

She did not find Custer Kingdon in the library where he usually spent his idle hours, but think-

ing nothing of this she went upstairs to her own room.

There were many shadows in the corridors of the handsome house, and Clarice flitted through some of these like a ghost.

When she reached the half-open door of Carlos Kingdon's private room, she was startled by a sight that met her glance.

Some one was in the apartment, and Clarice did not have to look twice to see that the figure bending over the broker's open desk was the new heir.

Mad Meg's injunction for her to keep her eyes open now returned with full force, and she drew back, watchful and still.

She saw Custer Kingdon take paper after paper from the pigeon-holes, examine them carefully, and put them back.

"A true son would not do that," flashed through the girl's mind.

At last the boy closed the desk, and turned so quickly that he caught sight of the figure just beyond the door.

Clarice's heart seemed to rise to her throat in an instant.

She drew back, but it was too late.

Tony, bounding across the room, fell upon her with the fury of a young panther, and the next moment she felt his fingers sinking into her wrist.

"Not a word about this, do you understand?" cried the boy, the words fairly forming a hiss as they came forth. "I was looking for a few stamps in his desk, but he needn't know it. I don't rob people! I'd be a nice fellow to despoil my father of anything valuable, wouldn't I?"

The heart of the girl beat too fast for her to reply.

"Remember! Keep this to yourself," Tony went on. "If you don't I'll make it warm for you here, for I'm the heir and know my rights. There! Go where you please, but don't please to play spy on me!" And he released her, and walked off, saying something more which she could not catch.

"There's a serpent in the house," said Clarice to herself, while she went toward her own apartments. "If I thought I could find Mad Meg, I'd go down and look for her. She knows more than she told me; but I'll recollect her warning, and keep my eyes open."

It was very late that night when Clarice fell asleep. She could not help thinking of the woman she had encountered in the Park, nor of the scene in the broker's room.

CHAPTER IX.

MOTHER SCAMMON'S CATCH.

THIS seems to be a trap with no hole in it. It is as dark as Egypt, too, and one needs the eyes of an owl to help himself in here."

Thus spoke Dick o' the Docks when he found himself alone after the departure of Wat Waffles and Mother Scammon.

He was cooped up in a dark room barely eight-by-ten with not a particle of light natural or artificial to show him where he was.

He thought of Mollie and wondered whether his arrival in the house had been discovered by her. If he could have seen Mother Scammon's visit to the girl he would have thought that fate was surely against him, but he was not to be thus favored.

Mollie was not so sound asleep as Mother Scammon thought her.

The woman had barely left the room ere the girl sprung from bed and bounded to the door.

She heard mother Scammon go down-stairs where as we have seen she told Waffles that her protegee was sound asleep.

Going noiselessly to the room whose peep-hole in the floor afforded a view of the apartment beneath, she looked down upon the two plotters in consultation.

Besides this she heard a good deal of their conversation, gleaned enough to tell her that the prisoner in the dark room should be rescued as soon as possible.

By and by Waffles took his departure and the girl waited until Mother Scammon had retired to her part of the house.

Mollie was a street waif who, some years prior to the opening of our story, had fallen into Mother Scammon's hands under circumstances not necessary to be narrated here. Despite her surroundings she had grown up with a quick, bright wit and was a strong, good looking girl.

She had long before discovered that Mother Scammon was a human vulture ready at all times to thrive by any means; but as the woman had given her a home when she was homeless she had remained with her, hoping that a time would come when she could better her condition.

Mollie—if she had another name she did not know it—knew that serious consequences would follow a failure to rescue Dick, whose arrival at the house in the Waffles grip she had secretly witnessed.

The girl waited until the house was quiet.

While she had never been permitted to penetrate to the secrets of the dark room she knew its exact location, and believed that with certain keys in her possession she could reach the enemy of the plotters and send him back to the trail he had been following.

Mollie went to her work with a fearless heart in her bosom.

She doubted not that Wat Waffles had gone back to New York to plot new villainy, or to reap the golden rewards of his audacity.

Dick needed help; that was enough for her to know.

Mother Scammon's protegee, gliding downstairs, reached the vicinity of the black trap. She laid her hand on the knob, turned it to attract the captive's attention, and listened.

A footstep on the inside came toward the door.

"Dick!" said Mollie, putting her mouth close to the keyhole.

In an instant a response was heard.

"Mollie!"

The breathing of her name thrilled and delighted the girl.

Dick was still there; Mother Scammon had sprung no trap and helped him out of the world.

"It is a new Egypt in here," continued the boy, in the dark. "Wat Waffles knew of this dungeon when he arrested me. When I get out, if I ever do, I propose to show him that the tables can be turned with neatness and dispatch. I—"

"Hist!" interrupted the girl, and then she drew back and for the first time felt her heart in her throat.

Her sharp senses had not deceived her when they told her that a footstep, soft and cat-like, but a footstep all the same, had sounded at the further end of the brief corridor.

Was it Mother Scammon, abroad, lynx-like, watchful and suspicious?

The girl believed that it was, and in a little time she was entirely convinced.

Down the passage came the same dangerous step, and while Mollie looked she saw the moving figure of her guardian, a figure she knew only too well from frequent contact.

Mollie could not retreat; it was too late for that.

"Ha! what are you doing here?" parted Mother Scammon's lips as she stopped before the breathless girl.

There was anger in the voice, and the light was not so dim but that Mollie could see the flashing eyes that burned above her dark cheeks.

"I thought you were asleep," continued the woman, sending a rapid glance toward the door. "You are a spy in my house—in the home of the woman who gave you a home. Is this the way you repay a kindness?"

"I am not playing spy," answered Mollie.

"Then what are you doing here?"

"I came to open the cage and let the bird out."

An exclamation of rage broke from Mother Scammon's throat.

"You did, eh? You open that door and let him out?" she cried.

Mollie looked her squarely in the face and answered fearlessly:

"I would!"

The girl's defiance seemed to paralyze the maddened virago.

In an instant she caught Mollie's arm and jerked her forward, almost fetching her clear of the floor by the violence of her action.

"This is gratitude with a vengeance!" she shouted. "What is the bird in the cage to you?"

Mollie did not see fit to answer this fairly.

"You have no right to shut him up," said she.

"No right?" echoed Mother Scammon. "We'll show him what rights we have before we're through with him! You haven't tampered with the lock, have you?"

She dragged Mollie back to the door and made sure that the lock had not been picked before she proceeded.

In five minutes the boy detective's friend found herself tied in a heavy chair in a room lighted by a lamp.

For some time Mother Scammon stood off and eyed her fiercely, saying nothing.

Mollie, the waif, knew that a storm was brewing.

All at once the woman bounded forward and

seemed about to demolish her with her fists, but as if suddenly changing her mind, she laughed in her captive's face.

"You don't know how to feather your nest!" she exclaimed. "Don't you know that I can put my hand upon plenty of money whenever I want to?"

"Honestly?" asked Mollie.

"What difference does that make?" was the quick rejoinder.

"I don't think money that comes through Wat Waffles is honest money."

"No? Well, it is honest enough for me!" And Mother Scammon laughed again. "Who is the boy in the dark cage? You know him."

There was no reply.

"What! don't you want to give him away?"

"I betray no one."

This resolute answer almost whitened the woman's face.

Once more she came toward Mollie with her hands clinched, but the second time drew off as if abashed by her fearless demeanor.

"Sit there! I'll see you after awhile," she said at last, and then, to Mollie's surprise, she turned and left the room, locking the door after her.

The sound of Mother Scammon's footsteps soon died away and the girl had the room to herself.

Hour after hour passed and the tigress did not return. Had she crossed the river to consult with Wat Waffles?

At last the light in the room became that of another day.

The long streaks of dawn came in at the windows and found Mollie still fastened in the chair and as much a prisoner as ever.

She began to wonder if Mother Scammon had not deserted the house for good, leaving Dick in the dark room and herself in the lighter one to die from sheer exhaustion and starvation.

It was a fearful thought and one which the poor girl could not shake off.

She did not know that at the last moment some one was approaching the house.

She heard the front door open and then caught the sound of a footstep.

Mother Scammon's? No, it was too heavy for hers.

It may be imagined Mollie waited with burning patience for the next move.

Presently the door directly in front of her was unlocked, then it swung open, and she saw, not the face of Mother Scammon nor that of Wat Waffles, but the features of a man whom she did not know.

He was a youngish man with a sharp, keen face and a clear eye. Mollie thought he looked like a detective whom Dick had once pointed out to her on the streets of New York.

At sight of her the man stopped and seemed surprised to find her the only tenant of the room and tied in a chair at that.

"I'm sure you're welcome," said the girl with a smile. "I've been waiting a long time for some one, though not exactly for you."

The man drew forth a pocket-knife as he came forward, and in a moment Mollie was free with an expression of thankfulness in her eyes.

"Now let's open the cage!" cried she, taking his hand.

"What cage?"

"The one that holds Dick o' the Docks."

The stranger looked at her in amazement.

"Where is the boy? I know him!" said he.

"Come; I'll show you."

Mollie took her rescuer straight to the door of Dick's prison, and from a bunch of keys the man selected one that fitted the lock.

But when the door was opened Mollie uttered a cry of horror and fell back, shuddering.

The room was empty!

CHAPTER X.

THE DETECTIVE'S PRISONER.

THE boy shut up in the dark by Wat Waffles and Mother Scammon had met with a thrilling adventure, which it becomes our duty to describe.

When he discovered from certain sounds that Mollie had been prevented from rescuing him by the timely arrival of the vixen of the house, he fully expected that the girl would be badly dealt with for her courage.

He did not think of himself for the moment, though he was in danger of losing his life.

As he waited in the darkness for another move on the chess-board, he heard a slight grating noise which seemed to come from a point overhead. Crossing the room on tip-toe in order to inquire into the sound, Dick o' the Docks listened for a repetition.

All at once, instead of a noise from above, the

floor seemed to drop, and the boy instinctively clutched at the bare wall for support.

"My God!" exclaimed Dick. "I am the victim of a devilish trap!"

And so he was!

The wall afforded no support whatever, and the boy soon—very soon—grew tired of fighting for help in that direction.

In an instant he gave up the struggle and dropped into an opening which was as dark as the room in which he had been imprisoned.

It was not a far fall, and the moment Dick landed on hard ground the trap above shut with a bang.

Fortunately he had not been hurt by the fall, although it had stunned him, and in a little while he was examining his prison, which appeared to be a cellar of ample dimensions with a single door apparently nailed shut.

Dick guessed that the trap had been set and sprung by Mother Scammon, which was the case, for if he could have looked beyond his prison at a certain time he would have seen a hand leap up above a pair of flashing eyes and jerk a heavy cord with violence.

Mother Scammon had thrown Dick into the cellar before quitting the house and when she walked out leaving Mollie bound in the chair as we have seen it was with the belief that she had played two cards which were decided trumps.

Dick in the cellar promised to fare worse than in the dungeon-like room. The place was damp and moldy and what added to his apprehension was the nailed door that threatened to become the door of a tomb.

Meantime Mother Scammon had hurried to the river and taken the first boat.

Reaching New York she disappeared in a jiffy and ere long was threading the streets toward the quarters occupied by Wat Waffles in the role of Bolivar Betts, the restorer, of Custer Kingdon the broker's heir.

She entered the house and proceeded upstairs without the formality of knocking and in another moment burst in upon Waffles who seemed to be at peace with the world in the enjoyment of his cigar.

"In mercy's name!" cried Wat opening his eyes as Mother Scammon appeared. "I thought I left you on guard across the river."

"So you did," was the answer. "But you see I am here instead of being across there. I opened the trap and left."

The false Mr. Betts looked surprised for another moment.

"You made no blunder? You are sure of that?" he asked.

"When did I blunder?" was the quick retort. "The trap isn't out o' repair for it has been inspected within the past two days. The boy is in the cellar and the girl—"

"Yes, the girl—what of her?" interrupted Waffles.

"I'll go back and see that she discovers nothing. I left her in no condition to do us injury."

"It was lucky that I nabbed the youngster when I did," smiled Waffles. "He was so cleverly caught that he could do nothing, but stare and hold his breath. If I had not detected the young rat on the ferry he might have escaped me altogether."

Mother Scammon was silent for a moment.

"I think I ought to congratulate Tony on his success," she presently said.

"You?" exclaimed Waffles.

"Why not? Hain't I interested?"

"Yes—but—"

"But what?" broke in Mother Scammon.

"I think you had better stay away."

Waffles spoke with a good deal of firmness, to which the woman did not take very kindly.

"He ought to be getting used to his place by this time," she rejoined. "It's a great change. Are you sure the boy will make no blunders?"

"A boy like Tony!" exclaimed Waffles, amazed. "You don't know how well he understands the business. Why, he is the best pupil I ever had. No fears about Custer Kingdon, ha, ha!—not at all."

Mother Scammon seemed to derive some satisfaction from Waffles's assurances, and at the conclusion of Wat's chuckle she rose to take her leave.

"Which way?" queried the plotter.

"Back to the nest," was the response.

"Don't you want company to the boat?"

"Me want escort to the river?" the woman laughed. "When I do I'll let you know." And leaving Mr. Betts to the uninterrupted enjoyment of his smoke, she went out with a singular smile lurking at the corners of her mouth.

"That's a queer creature," murmured Waf-

lies, when the door had closed upon Mother Scammon. "She never carries her notions very far—not far enough to cross me, because she knows that I hold her under my thumb. If Pappy Powder could have known of her whereabouts before he died she might have had a visitor, but the old man did not find her!"

Instead of going to the ferry, as it was expected she would do, the woman who had left Wat Waffles's new abode turned in an opposite direction and went up-town.

Not long afterward she appeared in the neighborhood of Carlos Kingdon's abode, and finding the house without much difficulty she watched it with a curiosity which did not abate.

Evidently Mother Scammon wanted to see the inside of the premises, for her interest took her up the steps, and before long she was listening at the door as if certain voices had caught her ear.

All at once she left her steps and started off. "I'll see him for my own satisfaction before long, whether Wat Waffles says so or not," she exclaimed, as she moved off. "I know of no person who has a better right to talk to him. I'm going to have my full share of the spoils, or know why not."

Several minutes later the woman in crossing the little park just beyond the Kingdon house heard a quick step behind her and as she turned she found herself face to face with a strange man and felt a hand of authority upon her arm.

You are Margaret Scammon, sometimes "Mother" Scammon, are you not?" asked the man, who saw the woman lose color under his searching look.

"What if I am?" asked the woman. "We want you," was the reply.

It was probably not the first time the woman had been arrested, for almost immediately she put on a bold front and straightened brazenly in the stranger's grip.

"I'd like to know what you want with me!" she exclaimed.

"Your husband is dead."

"My husband?"

"Yes. He has been murdered."

Mother Scammon started in spite of herself.

"You can't play off by putting on a cool exterior," continued the man, whose mien now proclaimed him a detective. "Pappy Powder has been choked to death, and as his runaway wife and one who hated him I arrest you for having a hand in the game."

The woman, now really alarmed, tried to speak, but the words seemed to stick in her throat.

"Come with me," resumed the detective. "I am Cid Cuyler and am empowered to take you in charge."

Mother Scammon walked away like a person moving through the maze of some frightful dream.

She felt the hand of the detective sinking into her flesh as it were and did not speak until some distance had been traversed.

"Where did they find him?" she suddenly inquired.

"In his picture gallery lying on the floor."

"Dead?"

"Dead!"

"Choked, did you say?"

"Choked to death! The marks of fingers were still to be seen when I viewed the corpse."

"You don't stop to think that I may be innocent."

Cid Cuyler smiled.

"I am willing to take you to the station anyhow," he said. "If you can prove an *alibi* all right. You don't deny that you were Pappy Powder's wife although for many years you haven't been a wife to him."

Mother Scammon made no reply, and for some time the detective regarded her in silence.

"What became of your boy?" Cuyler suddenly asked—so suddenly, indeed, that the woman uttered a sharp cry.

"My—boy?" she exclaimed, looking bewilderingly into the detective's face.

"Yes. Is he dead?"

The woman's countenance quickly changed.

"See here! you don't catch me in any of your traps!" cried she. "I deny that I ever had a boy. Prove it!" And with flashing eyes Mother Scammon marched on, like a person who had just won a victory.

A few moments afterward she was locked up in the station on the most serious charge she had ever encountered. In searching her, a bunch of keys came to light, and were given to the young detective who had effected the arrest.

Half an hour later, Cid Cuyler was on the

ferry-boat moving toward the Jersey shore, and when he landed, he proceeded straight to the old house where, as we have seen, he released Mollie from the clutches of the chair, and followed her to the dark room only to find it empty, Dick Doan having fallen into another and a more perilous trap.

The detective was not disposed to give up the hunt.

He had visited the house for the purpose of collecting evidence against Mother Scammon, whom he believed guilty of the murder of Pappy Powder; but he was soon to learn his mistake, and strike the right trail by a strange discovery.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNPLEASANT VISITOR.

MR. WAT WAFFLES, in the guise of Bolivar Betts, made a startling find early the next morning.

This was brought about by the perusal of a paper while at breakfast.

It informed him that the murder of Pappy Powder had been discovered, and also that a woman named Margaret Scammon had been arrested on suspicion.

The shrewd schemer seemed to choke while he read.

What! Mother Scammon in the hands of the authorities charged with murder?

It is no wonder that Wat finished his meal in short order. His face showed agitation while he paid his score at the cashier's desk, and he left the restaurant as soon as possible.

The morning was not far advanced when Waffles met Custer Kingdon in the snug park near the broker's home.

"I've been waiting for you," exclaimed the boy. "I have something to tell you. I have been watched."

"Watched?" echoed Waffles, losing some color as a thought of impending disaster crossed his mind.

"Nothing less than that. Any other word won't fit," was the response.

"Who has watched you?"

"The girl—Clarice."

"What makes her play spy? Who has raised a suspicion in her mind?"

"I don't know. She saw me at the desk and I gave her to understand in pretty plain terms that she had better keep a still tongue in her head."

"Well?"

"She seemed to believe that I wasn't at anything crooked and thus I left her. She can't turn Carlos Kingdon against me. He believes I am his son and every hour strengthens that belief. We're safe there, but I don't like to be watched and I won't stand it."

Tony's eyes got a mad flash while he talked.

"What did you get for the common cause?" queried the schemer.

The boy put one hand in his bosom and produced a package which Waffles watched with delight.

"How much?" he asked with eagerness.

"Nearly a thousand, beside some or two papers which I think have some importance."

"You're worth your weight in gold, boy!" cried Waffles. "When you go back be sure not to get into another fracas with Clarice. You don't know what may happen in the future."

"She sha'n't watch me!" exclaimed Tony, or Custer Kingdon, shutting his hands. "If she does it again I'll—yes, I'll choke her!"

"Nothing of the kind," admonished Waffles. "We can't afford to imperil everything by a little display of temper. They've picked up Mother Scammon, but the old lady won't talk to suit them."

"What did they pick her up for?"

"Haven't you read this morning's papers?"

"No."

"Well, an old fellow, known as Pappy Powder, was found dead on the floor of his basement hovel, and as he and Mother Scammon used to be acquainted, a smart detective, named Cid Cuyler, ran her down for the deed."

"But she didn't do it, did she?"

"I guess not."

Tony remained silent for a moment.

"She's pretty tricky from what I know of her, but I can't put murder at her door. I won't go that far. If the dead wretch didn't deserve what he got I hope they will catch the right person and hang him higher than Haman."

Wat Waffles gave a quick start at the boy's emphasis, but Tony did not seem to see it, as he continued:

"Where is Mother Scammon now?"

"At the station. She is likely to be in jail by night."

"Won't they make her 'talk'?"

"I'd like to see 'em! A shrewd bird like her?" And Waffles laughed derisively. "I'm not afraid of her giving our game away. She don't intend to kill the goose that lays a golden egg, just because she's in a pickle. They can't prove anything against her, because *her* hands are clean."

"I'm glad of that," smiled the boy. "But I must be going back. When will you be here again?"

"To-morrow night, at nine."

"I won't forget."

As Tony moved away, going toward the broker's house, he was watched closely by Wat Waffles until he mounted the steps, and disappeared beyond the door.

"The game is paying," exclaimed the rascal to himself as he turned away. "A thousand in cash, with some important papers, don't constitute a bad haul. The boy mustn't cross the girl. She's got a wonderful grip on Carlos Kingdon, and we can scoop the whole fortune by Tony marrying her. If she gets an aversion to him the jig may be up, for she is as knowing as she is pretty."

Not far behind Wat Waffles walked a woman, whose features were hidden by a vail.

She had a quick and nervous tread, and the sharp, black eyes that sparkled beneath the vail never lost sight of Waffles for a moment.

When the rascal turned into the street where he was known as Bolivar Betts, he still had the mysterious creature at his heels, and shortly after he ascended the stairs leading to his lodgings, the strange woman climbed them too.

Eager to investigate the contents of the package which he had received from Tony, Waffles turned on the gas and relieved his pocket of the treasure.

His eyes danced at sight of the crisp banknotes, and in a moment he was immersed in the documents that accompanied them.

Suddenly the consummate scoundrel looked up, and saw standing before him the strange spy, with her vail thrown back, and a glitter in the depths of her eyes.

Wat Waffles turned all colors in the space of half a minute.

The papers fell from his hands into his lap, and then quitting his chair, with a bound he started toward the woman, crying:

"In God's name, what brings you here?"

The plotter's visitor stepped forward and tried to touch him with her hand, but he fell back.

"You didn't expect me? Ha, ha! of course not," said she. "As a rule, these insane asylums hold their victims until the grave hides them forever. I've lost what little beauty I had, but all the same I am still your wife, though I ought to be ashamed to say it standing here. I have been 'Mad Meg' so long that I nearly forgot my true identity. You don't seem to want me just now."

During the woman's speech Wat Waffles had thought with surprising rapidity.

He was alone with the creature who had it in her power to baffle him in his game for a fortune.

He knew that she was not mad, that her imurement in the asylum was the result of a deep scheme of his, but here she was—at large, and still his wife as she had just told him in plain English!

"I was asking about you last week," said Waffles, in conciliatory tones. "Doctor Dabus said you were improving, though he gave me no reason to hope that you would be out so soon. I'm glad you've come, though you don't find me very well situated to take in company."

"No, that I don't," returned the woman, glancing round the room, but in a moment her eyes came back to Waffles and to the money and papers on the table.

"You seem to be prospering," she said, with a smile.

"Not much. I'm only comfortably situated," answered Wat. "When did you leave the place?"

"I've been out some time. They're looking for me, too."

"Ah! you ran away?"

"I did!" And before he could reply she stepped nearer still and leaned toward him with flashing eyes. "Do you want to send me back?"

"No, why should I?"

His manner of speech appeared to allay Mad Meg's suspicions.

"You've made a fine play, though, haven't you?" she laughed. "They say you've found

the lost Kingdon heir. Where did you pick him up?"

Waffles colored.

"There's where you get your money, is it?" she went on.

"No!"

The next instant he threw out his hands and caught her wrists. At the same time he looked flendishly into her face.

Mad Meg struggled to escape, but he held her as with the merciless grip of a vise.

"No, you don't!" he laughed, pushing her back into a chair. "I don't intend to let you ruin what chances I have for feathering my nest. You belong where you have lately been."

The woman seemed to lose all power of resisting, as if Waffles had inspired her with a nameless terror.

Suddenly seizing a handkerchief, he bound it tightly over her mouth, and did not stop until she was a helpless prisoner in the chair.

"Now wait there until they come for you," said he, quitting the room with a parting look.

He went down-stairs and sought the nearest telephone exchange which was in the neighborhood.

Calling up a certain private asylum in the city's suburbs, he sent a message that Mad Meg, the escaped patient, was to be found at such a place, then waited for an answer, and having received it, he went back with a grin of sardonic delight on his face to find the mad bird he had caught still in the chair.

An hour after these events a covered van drove up to the gutter beneath his room, and with his own hands Wat Waffles assisted his wife into it and saw her taken back to the madhouse.

CHAPTER XII.

AN IMP OF COOLNESS.

DICK O' THE DOCKS, whom we left in the dark cellar beneath the dungeon-like room in Mother Scammon's house in Jersey, was not destined to perish there. Thoughts of discouragement, but not of hopelessness, were taking hold on him when he heard the faint click of a lock somewhere overhead, and by listening attentively he heard the hum of voices.

He felt that some person besides Waffles and Mother Scammon had come back, and his heart beat rapidly for joy. When he had made up his mind that he had nothing to fear from the parties above, he shouted with all his might and seemed to attract attention.

By diligent search by Cid Cuyler the detective and Mollie, the trap-door was discovered, and a few blows with an ax destroyed its usefulness as a barrier to liberty.

In a little while the imprisoned boy was drawn up by the strong arms of the detective, and was welcomed by Mollie, whose eyes looked brighter than ever.

Cuyler detailed the arrest of Mother Scammon for the murder of Pappy Powder, the city hermit, but Dick shook his head doubtfully at the end of the narrative.

"The person I saw standing in the shadow of Pappy Powder's steps the last time I left the old man alive, wasn't Mother Scammon," said the scavenger of the docks.

"Aha! you saw some one there, did you?" queried the detective.

"I did. I brushed the person in hiding, and when I looked back, I thought I recognized the form."

"Whose form, think you, Dick?"

"Wat Waffles's."

This answer threw Cuyler into a deep study.

"Mother Scammon may be innocent after all," said he. "We detectives don't like to make any mistakes, but I don't want to see the innocent suffer for the guilty. Mother Scammon hated Pappy Powder, who was a hard old knot to deal with when she left him."

"When she left him? What do you mean?" exclaimed Mollie.

The detective smiled before he replied.

"You don't seem to know much about the past life of the woman with whom you have lived," said he, turning to the girl. "Did you ever dream that she was once Pappy Powder's wife?"

A sudden light appeared to illumine the girl's mind.

"That seems to unlock a little mystery," she exclaimed, crossing the room.

Dick and the detective waited for her to return, and when she came back she held in her hand a small package which, when opened, was found to contain a child's picture.

"Can this be Mother Scammon's boy?" Mollie asked, as Cuyler took the picture from her.

Dick leaned forward and studied the portrait with a good deal of interest.

"It must be he!" he cried, drawing the attention of both Mollie and the detective to him.

"What do you mean, Dick?"

"I mean that I see a striking resemblance between the face in the picture and Custer Kingdon, the broker's son. It is not strong enough to swear by, but I can't help thinking that we are at last on the right trail."

"I trust we are, for if the broker has been deceived he must be rescued from the hands of the plotters."

"Did Mother Scammon have a son?" asked the boy detective.

"She did."

"While she was Pappy Powder's wife?"

"Yes."

"What became of the child?"

"The woman if questioned now would say it is dead."

"Do you believe that, Captain Cuyler?"

"Since you have discovered a resemblance between this portrait and Custer Kingdon, I can't say that I do," was the reply. "In searching Pappy Powder's retreat, I came across ample evidence of his marriage with Mother Scammon and of the birth of a son, though I accidentally discovered some time ago that the two were man and wife. They quarreled and separated, and the woman resisted all overtures for a reconciliation. She afterward fell in with—"

"Wat Waffles, alias Bolivar Betts!" broke in Dick.

"It must be so from what Mollie has told me," resumed the detective. "I shall look after Mr. Betts from this moment."

"For the murder of Pappy Powder?"

"For that and for a very deep game of hoodwink which he seems to be playing with Carlos Kingdon as a victim."

"He's a jail-bird!" said Dick, remembering what Pappy Powder had told him.

"We know his record," smiled Cuyler. "It isn't without a blemish by any means. Mr. Waffles knows the inside of more than one cell and he is in a fair way to examine another."

It was then agreed that Mollie should remain in the house while Dick and the detective crossed the river to pursue the trail which the latter said had been struck.

The boy detective returned to his old quarters leaving Cuyler to find Wat Waffles whom he intended to shadow until he had woven a net of evidence about the consummate scamp.

But Wat was sharp enough—almost too sharp for the young Vidocq.

Some-how-or-other when he had seen his wife off for the asylum, he suddenly changed his quarters and with the change of location he put on other feathers which gave him quite a different appearance.

Emboldened by the change he went to the station-house to which Cid Cuyler had escorted Mother Scammon after her arrest and asked to see her.

It happened that a not over-cautious lieutenant of police was on duty, and Wat's request was granted. Besides this, by the judicious application of a little gold in the right place, he was accorded the privilege of a private interview, after which he passed out unmolested and vanished.

"They don't catch Mother Scammon for anything," chuckled Waffles as he walked off. "We'll come out of this little affair without a scratch, and the game will pan out as expected. They don't catch weasels asleep—not of the sort I am, at any rate. I'll go down and see what the golden pigeon knows."

Carlos Kingdon was a late worker. Long after the last clerk had departed he could be found in the pleasant little up-stair's office, as hard at work as at any hour during the day.

Wat Waffles saw by a light in a certain window that the broker was still down-town, and when he knocked at a door he was asked to enter in a cheery voice.

Carlos Kingdon was alone, and the wary plotter, with his most pleasant face, was soon seated at the same table, asking after Custer's health and prospects.

"We're going to have a little breeze at home," suddenly said the broker.

"Nothing serious, I hope?"

"I think not. Clarice has taken an aversion to my boy."

Waffles pretended to treat the matter lightly.

"They'll come closer to one another when better acquainted," he laughed.

"I don't know." Kingdon shook his head.

"Clarice is resolute. I did not say much to her. She seems to have a secret of some kind which she would yet dare not impart."

Waffles felt a strange sensation at the roots of his hair.

"I want peace in the house," continued the broker. "They are both my children now, and one shall not suffer by the restoration of the other."

"That is right. Mr. Kingdon, did you ever think that I might be hoodwinking you?"

Carlos Kingdon's look became a momentary stare of amazement.

"Never for a moment, Betts," he exclaimed. "A man who has lengthened my life as you have couldn't be an impostor if he tried. I know a good deal about human nature, and I guess I'm the last man who could be deceived. You thought you'd try me, eh?"

"Just a little," smiled Waffles. "If I'm a rascal, by Jupiter! I want to know it."

"Ha, ha! that's good!" laughed Kingdon. "A good many rascals nowadays wouldn't have their true characters known for the world."

"That's a fact," admitted Waffles, knowing that he was one of those very fellows. "I've tried to live a pretty honest life, but we all make mistakes."

"Of course. I will see that my boy doesn't make very many as he grows to manhood. By the way I caught him doing a strange thing yesterday."

"What was that?"

"He was watching a lot of street Arabs playing marbles. If I hadn't come up when I did I believe he would have joined them. I presume he used to play when with the Gypsies who had him awhile, but the son of Carlos Kingdon shan't go back to the ways of the gutter-snipes of New York."

Waffles was inclined to laugh at the incident related by the broker, but Kingdon's seriousness kept the laugh back.

"I must post him better than that," thought Wat. "It was the boy's blood asserting itself. By Jove! he must have his wits about him when he goes out."

When Waffles had finished with Kingdon he went down upon the almost deserted street.

"I wonder if the old place is under lock and key?" he thought. "It wouldn't do any harm for one to go down and look. Pappy Powder used to have money and he kept it in odd places, too. I think I can find the spot even in the dark."

The shrewd rascal soon reached the stone steps that led down to the picture gallery once occupied by the murdered man.

He found the door ajar and the room beyond stripped of every particle of furniture—probably taken by the owner for rent.

A match showed him the pictures on the walls, the evil faces of criminals of all kinds and scenes of every sort.

"Nothing here! Cleaned out!" ejaculated Wat, but as he threw down his match he fell back with a startling cry.

A man stood before him, blocking his way to the door!

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK AND TONY.

WAFFLES was like a tiger at bay.

The man who was about his build was revealed by the faint lamplight which came down the cellar-way, and found an entrance through the door wide open.

For a moment the suddenly-discovered man eyed the apparition, and then he went forward like an unleashed bloodhound.

The attack was not altogether unexpected, for the enemy braced himself, but Waffles landed upon him with a force great enough to throw him off his feet, and then a desperate struggle in the dark began.

In the dark, we say, for the door, struck by Waffles, flew shut, wrapping the apartment in the densest gloom.

Several minutes of hard work followed.

The rascal from Gotham found himself well-matched by the stranger, and his best efforts were met and baffled almost before they were fully matured.

At last Waffles got a grip on the enemy's throat which could not be shaken off.

In vain did the unknown try to squirm out of the terrible clutch which tightened all the time, and Wat felt that victory was within his grasp.

He bore his antagonist against the quaintly-pictured wall, pressing him so hard that the boards seemed to yield, and when sound and

struggle ceased, he loosened his grip and let the inanimate body sink to the floor.

It was well for Waffles that the contest ended when it did.

He was exhausted, and for a little while leaned against the wall, as weak as a child.

When he lit a match, he saw the shapely features of an unknown man.

"A detective for the world!" exclaimed Waffles. "Heaven knows how soon another may come. I can't go through another tussle like that. It would be the end of me. Dead men tell no tales, and this one belongs to that silent family!"

He did not tarry another moment, but left the room in the greatest haste, and disappeared on the street above.

He inwardly cursed himself for having gone to Pappy Powder's place, but when he finally reflected he rather rejoiced that he had visited it, for, by doing so, he had put a dangerous spy out of the way.

At the time of the struggle in the dark, a boy was watching a youth of his own age, as he walked back and forth in a park, as if waiting for some one.

Dick o' the Docks was the watcher and Custer Kingdon the person so closely watched.

"A fraud! Of course you are!" exclaimed the young detective. "If I were to pronounce the word 'Tony' at your ear, you would nearly jump out o' your shoes. Are you waiting for Wat Waffles, the sly old fox who is playing you for the golden stakes? He may not come tonight, for Cuyler is looking after him, and he may fall into the trap that caught Mother Scammon."

Dick continued to eye Tony a few moments longer, when he drew nearer and got a better view, which seemed to make his eyes snap.

"I'll strike up an acquaintance," thought the lad of the docks. "He won't object to giving a fellow a light from the way he smokes."

The following moment Tony was startled by a voice at his elbow, and when he turned he found Dick there asking for a light for a very small cigar, which he held between thumb and finger.

"Certainly, boy," responded the broker's heir, drawing forth an elegant silvered match-box, which he extended open to Dick.

Young Doan helped himself and slowly lighted his cigar, at the same time looking askance at his companion.

"Who are you, anyway?" inquired Tony.

"Me? I'm Tom Teller o' Bleecker street."

Tony laughed.

"I know that old street well," said he.

"Do, eh? Lot's o' fun there?"

"I used to have it—when I went after it," added Tony, catching himself.

"Don't you go any more?"

"I can't."

Dick put on a puzzled expression.

"You might take off your good duds for a while, and go over just to have a time," said he, looking Tony over from head to foot.

"I'd like to. There's no fun here."

"I'll take your place."

It seemed Tony's turn to laugh, and he did so right heartily.

"Where do you live on Bleecker street?" he asked.

"Most anywhere along it."

"That's not very definite."

"Mebbe not, but it's about as definite as I can get. Do you know Uncle Noll's Nest?"

"Don't I?" exclaimed Tony, his eyes snapping with delight. "I've been all over it."

"Not lately, I s'pect?"

"Not very."

"This summer?"

"No, nor last for that matter. I've been there though."

Dick thought for a moment.

"Tommy Topp, the little lame boy at Uncle Noll's is dead," said he. "I used to like him."

"So did I," was the response. "He was fond of playing fortune-telling with his wizard cards."

"So he was. He was run over by a butcher's wagon and died in the hospital."

By this time the boys appeared to be on the best of terms.

It was evident that Tony did not suspect the true character of his companion, and such seemed to be the charm of Dick's acquaintance that he was anxious to prolong the conversation.

But Dick did not want to remain too long.

Wat Waffles might steal up unawares and then the jig would be up.

"Well, if you can't go back to the old stamping-ground I'll have to go alone," remarked Dick, throwing his cigar away.

"I wish I could, but I'm tied at home just now. Some of these days I want to run over and see you all again. What did you say your name was?"

"Tom Teller. Don't 'Tommy' me, if you please. I'm 'most too big for that."

"I'll ask for 'Tom' Teller when I come. At Uncle Noll's, is it?"

"Yes."

The boys parted.

Dick o' the Docks walked away more than pleased with the results of his clever ruse.

"I've picked up one link anyway," said the boy to himself. "Before I shut my eyes if I shut them at all to-night, I'll pick up another."

He did not look back to see whether Tony continued in the Park or went to his new and luxurious home, but rapidly crossed a certain quarter of the city, dodging in and out among the shadows until he appeared on a street that still contained a good deal of life and ran into a monstrous frame building built on the old tenement plan.

This place was known everywhere in the neighborhood as Uncle Noll's Nest, and Dick had barely entered it when he was captured by a fluffy old fellow of uncertain age, and held out at arm's length in a comic manner.

"You've come back at last have you?" grinned the man. "Where have you been so long? Don't you like the Nest any more? Well, it ain't the old nest, but I'm here yet, ha, ha! Yes, Uncle Noll is here."

The speaker was the proprietor-in-chief of the tenement and when he set Dick down he suddenly grew serious and led the way to a little "office" at one side of the hall.

"I want to know something," said the boy.

"I thought so. I can always read 'business' in your face, boy. What is there in this?"

"A good deal, Uncle Noll."

"Enough to pay?"

"More than enough."

The old man took a chair, crossed his legs with the help of one of his great hands, and told Dick to proceed.

"I want to know if you've forgotten Tony," began the shadower of the docks.

The man put his hand to his forehead and reflected for a moment.

"I'm a leetle forgetful of late," said he. "Tommy will know him. Can I call Tommy?"

"Tommy isn't as dead as I said he was awhile ago," smiled Dick. "Yes, let the boy come in."

"I'll fetch him," and Uncle Noll of the Nest left the room.

In a few moments he returned carrying in his arms a boy who had never walked a step in his life. His lower limbs were shrunken and his arms looked unnaturally long, but his face was as bright as a dollar and his eyes uncommonly clear.

He gave utterance to a cry of delight the moment he saw Dick, and when Uncle Noll placed him in a chair alongside the young scavenger of the harbor he made no efforts to conceal his joy.

"When was Tony here last, Tommy?" asked Dick.

"Last summer," was the prompt reply.

"Be sure of what you say."

"I am, Dick. I set down in my diary about his going away, how I told his fortune with the wizard cards just before he left, and I've still got the little keepsake he gave me."

"What was it, Tommy?"

"His picture. He slipped away one afternoon and came back with a tin-type which I was glad to have."

"Where is the picture?"

"In my room."

Without another word Dick lifted the crippled boy out of the chair and carried him with ease to his room.

"This is it" said Tommy Topp, opening a drawer and taking out a portrait which he handed to Dick.

The young detective gave one look and flushed with triumph.

"This is Custer Kingdon, sure enough!" he cried. "I've got them now!"

"What do you mean?" broke forth the astonished Tommy. "That is Tony's picture."

"Yes, yes. Never mind what I said, Tommy. One o' these days you'll know more than you do now," and Dick, oblivious of surroundings, fell to studying the picture again.

CHAPTER XIV.

"UNLOCK THE DOOR."

It was amusing to see how eagerly Tommy Topp, the cripple of the Nest, watched Dick while he studied the picture of the boy Tony.

Tommy was anxious to ask a hundred questions about Dick's question, and the boy detective's promise that he should know more in the future did not satisfy him.

"I'd like to see Tony again," said the cripple.

"He was a downright clever boy and I was beginning to like him when a man came and took him away."

"A man, Tommy?"

"Yes. Tony went without any coaxing, too, as if the two were acquainted."

"What was the man like?"

"I didn't get to see much of him for he kept his hat pulled over his eyes, though he was a heavy-set man not very good looking and had a harsh voice."

"Wat Waffles for the world!" mentally exclaimed Dick.

"Where is Tony now?" queried Tommy.

"Living in clover."

"And that's why he doesn't come here any more is it?"

"I think so."

The two boys now went back to the old man's room, Dick carrying Tommy in his arms as before, and not long afterward he took his departure, promising Tommy to come back ere long with some good news.

Plased with the success of his movements Dick o' the Docks started out to find Cid Cuyler the detective who had left him for the purpose of ferreting out Wat Waffles the schemer.

If Dick had known of the combat in Pappy Powder's house between Waffles and the very man he (Dick) was hunting, he would have gone thither, but, ignorant of this thrilling event, he hurried to another part of the city where he expected to find the detective.

Suddenly there crossed the sidewalk just ahead of him a figure which despite the brief view he had of it caused a thrill to pervade his frame.

It was Wat Waffles.

There was no mistaking the well-known figure of the Gotham sharp, and before it could disappear the shadow of the docks was in pursuit. Dick seemed to forget everything else in the chase before him.

If Cid Cuyler had missed Waffles he would keep him in sight, and he thought he knew the by-ways of New York as well as the quarry ahead.

Suddenly however Dick found himself in the grip of a hand whose owner had turned on him before he could get out of the way.

The boy of the docks fell back and uttered a sharp cry, but he was not released.

To be again in the bands of Wat Waffles was a catastrophe he did not relish. It was dangerous to his enterprise and threatened to prove fatal.

"Heavens! I thought— Well, never mind! This catch is worth a gold mine!" cried Waffles.

"Unband me!" demanded Dick. "You have no right to arrest me."

"Haven't I?" was the rejoinder. "If I haven't the right to spoil your little play, I'd like to know who has."

"You thought I was still in Mother Scammon's trap," said Dick.

"I did, but I'll take you to a better one."

Dick o' the Docks was escorted from the scene of his capture by a man whose eyes had a triumphant flash.

Wat Waffles kept in the shade of the buildings and not long afterward unlocked a door beyond which he led the boy and pushed him toward a chair in a small room.

"All's fish that comes to my net," laughed Waffles, eying his prisoner with a good deal of satisfaction. "You're no shrimp if you are small. Why do you follow me?"

Dick made no reply.

"Don't want to talk, eh?" continued Waffles. "Don't you know that I can bury you out of sight forever?"

"I know nothing of the kind."

Waffles crossed the room and took several pieces of cord from a drawer.

The door was locked, an operation which Dick had witnessed on entering the room. They were on the third floor and a leap from the window meant death.

But the alert boy detective had no notion of perishing tamely at the hands of such a scoundrel as Wat Waffles was known to be.

When he saw the fellow's back turned he left his chair and caught it with a firm grip.

In an instant Waffles wheeled upon him with the cords in his hand, but the resolute boy did not yield an inch.

"Drop that chair!" commanded the plotter.

"Unlock the door!" was the response.

Waffles took a step forward, his hands clinched and his eyes on fire.

"Won't you?" he exclaimed. "By Jupiter! I'll throttle you till you're black in the face."

"Like you served Pappy Powder, eh?"

The man seemed to recoil before these startling words.

"What's that?" he cried.

"I guess I needn't repeat it. I spoke good English."

Once more Waffles came on, red to the temples, but Dick held his ground with the strong chair above his shoulders.

"You touch me at your peril, boy!" exclaimed the rogue. "I'm as strong as a lion."

At the same time he covered the remainder of the distance between him and the boy detective and all at once the chair came down upon his head with all the accompanying power Dick could muster.

Although Waffles threw up one hand to break the effects of the blow he was only partially successful, for he staggered under the stroke, and, ere he could recover, another one had been dealt.

Waffles went back to the wall, and Dick, despite his deep-seated dislike of the rascal, almost regretted the two blows which had covered his face with blood.

He threw down the chair and went to the door. The key was in the lock and a twist sent the bolt back, the sweetest sound Dick had heard in a long time.

With another glance at Waffles, who had sunk along the wall to the floor, he opened the door and stepped out.

"Better luck than I expected!" said he. "This is like getting out of a steel-trap unexpectedly. If Wat Waffles will occupy his haunt ten minutes I promise that he shall be in the hands of the police. If Cid Cuyler don't look out I'll finish the game before he gets a fair chance at it."

It was the boy's intention to put Waffles under arrest for assault, hoping to fasten the greater crime of fraud if not murder upon him before he could wriggle from the clutches of the law, and to carry out his purpose he addressed the first policeman whom he encountered after quitting the scene of his brief combat with Waffles.

The two hurried back to the spot, but when they entered the room they found that the bird had flown; not only this, but there was not wanting evidence that he had gone for good.

"Too late!" smiled the policeman. "This is the way it happens sometimes. You don't often get to put your fingers on these city fleas when you want 'em."

As there was nothing for Dick and the officer to do in the room they soon took their departure, the boy walking back to the spot where he had picked up the blue coat.

"Ain't you the boy who hunts the harbor?" suddenly queried the policeman, looking into Dick's face by the light of a street-lamp.

"I'm Dick o' the Docks."

"I thought so. You don't recollect me, I suppose?"

The boy detective shook his head.

"I am Jimmy Callister. Some years ago, when you were just learning to paddle a boat, I picked you out of the water after an upsetting. I dried you on the dock in the sun, and in a few minutes you were as lively as a cricket."

"I recollect the circumstance, though I had forgotten your name. I thank you again, Mr. Callister."

"Oh, that's all right!" laughed the big policeman, whose whiskers were nearly as red as his cheeks. "I remember at the time that you looked a little like a lost boy that New York went wild over some years ago. Where's your mother, Dick?"

"Dead, sir."

"Was she dead when I fished you out of the water?"

"She was."

"What was her name?"

"Mary Doan, I guess."

A smile spread over Jimmy Callister's face.

"You 'guess' eh?" said he. "What have you got to show that Mary Doan was your mother and that she was dead the first time we met?"

Dick looked in wonder at the policeman and did not speak for a moment.

"I don't know what you are driving at!" cried he.

"You wharf-rats are floaters on the sea of life," said Callister. "I take an interest in all o' ye. Twixt you and me and my club, Dick, I used to be a wharfer myself. Mary Doan, you say? Well, that doesn't keep me from remembering that at the time I thought you looked like that lost child of Kingdon the broker."

Dick could not repress a start.

"Come, Mr. Callister, you don't mean that?" he exclaimed, laughing.

"Certainly I do. I had my head so full of little Custer Kingdom once that I hadn't lost much of it when I found you. The resemblance between your face and the boy's was rather striking then, but," he looked very hard at Dick, "it isn't so great now."

"I've got nothing but poverty blood in me, but I'm satisfied all the same," said Dick. "Good night, Mr. Callister."

"Where are you going?—after the fellow we missed a while ago?"

"I'll find him yet."

"Be careful! He'll show his teeth again."

"We'll pull them if he does," was the reply that came back, and the next moment Jimmy Callister, twirling his stick, looked after the boy with a smile, while Dick himself was thinking of something he had not thought of before.

CHAPTER XV.

THE YOUNG HOT-HEADS.

WAT WAFFLES was a fugitive from justice. It was not the first time he had enjoyed this distinction, but now he was eager to hide himself anywhere, although he had not given up the game he had played so shrewdly and with such profit to himself.

He thought of several things at once when he recovered from the effects of the rather surprising knock-down he had received at the hands of Dick Doan.

He recollects that the boy had accused him of the murder of Pappy Powder, that he had throttled another man in the same place and that Dick would probably return soon with a policeman.

Such thoughts were apt to admonish him to clear out as soon as possible.

His eye had become black from the blow with the chair, and he was anxious to get away before it could lead to his discovery.

Five minutes had barely elapsed ere the room was vacated. Wat took a few little things and disappeared.

Therefore, when Dick came back, he found the apartment without a tenant as we have seen, Waffles being far away at the time, making tracks for a new hiding-place from which he expected to play a trump card every now and then and secure the prize of the game, Carlos Kingdon's fortune.

As to Dick, after his interview with Callister the policeman, he went straight to the lodging occupied by Cid Cuyler the detective who, with Mollie, had rescued him from Mother Scammon's trap in the old house in Jersey City.

But he found the door locked, and was obliged to turn back without seeing the shadower.

During his last movements he was observed by a pair of keen eyes which belonged to a figure that kept pace with him without noise, and when he turned back from Cuyler's quarters he was followed as before.

It happened that the detective's lodgings were in a part of the city not very far from Carlos Kingdon's residence.

The boy seemed to think of this before he had gone a square from the house.

Remembering his interview with Tony in the Park, and his discovery of the portrait in Tommy Topp's room, Dick appeared to be goaded toward the broker's house by a strong desire.

"Here! I want you!" said a sudden voice at his elbow.

The boy turned quickly.

"Ho!" he exclaimed, surprised to see Tony within reach. "I did not expect to meet you here."

"I should say not," was the answer. "What made you lie to me awhile ago?"

Dick assumed an expression of indignance which did not deceive Tony, the heir.

"Ain't you a spy? I believe you are!" he exclaimed, seizing the boy's collar. "You told me that Tommy Topp was dead."

"Well?"

"He is alive!"

"How do you know?"

"I've just seen him."

Dick was nonplussed for a moment. He saw that Tony had caught him in a fiction invented for the purpose of drawing him out and disclosing his origin. Waffles's confederate was in a passion.

The two boys were well-matched physically, and for a little while they looked at each other like young gladiators.

"I've a mind to escort you to the station," suddenly cried Tony.

"Come along! I'd just as lief go there as anywhere," answered Dick. "If you don't know the way to the station, I'll show you."

Tony did not accept the challenge.

"What made you try to hoodwink me?" he went on. "Did you think I wouldn't go to Uncle Noll's Nest and find you out?"

That is exactly what Dick had thought, though he did not say so.

"Who's paying you?" continued Tony.

"For what?"

"For playing spy."

"No one. You don't know that I'm playing spy."

"Don't I? What were you doing in the house on the other street?"

"What house?"

"The one occupied by Cid Cuyler, who, as everybody knows, is a detective."

"You've been watching me, then?"

Tony laughed, for Dick's reply was in his eyes a confession of guilt.

"A boy like you don't hoodwink other people and then hunt up a detective for nothing," he suddenly resumed. "You can't get away without telling me the whole story."

The boy shadow of the docks straightened and looked defiance in Tony's face.

"In the first place, I'm under no obligations to tell you anything," said he. "Secondly, you can't force anything from me."

This was plain enough, and Dick was ready to back up his words with all the strength at his command.

Somehow or other Tony did not seem inclined to accept the challenge thrown out by word and look.

"If I catch you spying any more, I'll make it warm for you!" said he.

Dick merely laughed.

"Remember!" continued Tony, shaking his finger at the wharf detective as he stepped back. "Keep your distance, and don't dog my steps. If you do, I'll break the ground with you!"

Without another word, Tony turned and walked away.

"I'm coming," exclaimed Dick, following him with clinched hands. "I happen to be going toward Carlos Kingdon's house, and a fellow has a right to go where he pleases in this city."

Tony drew aside, his face crimson with rage, and pointed up the street.

"Go on!" cried he. "Go ahead; don't play sleuth-hound at my heels."

Dick looked at him a moment, and then passed on. He walked rapid enough to soon get beyond Tony's sight, but when Waffles's false heir came near the house, he saw the figure of the dock detective on the steps.

The boy had just rung the bell, and was waiting for a response.

"This is impudence itself!" cried Tony, flying at Dick without giving him a moment for defense. "If I don't settle you here, you'll give us trouble."

The two boys almost went headlong to the sidewalk, but their hold on each other was not broken, and in a second they were struggling under one of the trees in front of the house.

Tony was desperate. The situation seemed to lend him strength, but his ire got the better of his judgment.

He was punishing Dick against the tree when a man appeared suddenly on the scene, and separated the combatants without ceremony, throwing them in two directions by main strength.

It was Carlos Kingdon himself, and before Dick had fully recovered he saw the broker lead Tony up the steps and disappear with him beyond the door.

"If he knew what I knew he wouldn't be so eager to protect that young scamp," thought the boy spy of the docks, picking up his hat and walking off with a parting glance. "Maybe it is best that I did not get to play the game I had in my mind. I was going to tell Carlos Kingdon all I knew. Maybe he would have listened, and perhaps I would have been ordered out of the house. Tony will tell a plausible tale of some kind, and Kingdon will believe him. They've hoodwinked the broker completely. I never saw anything like it. Waffles knows what he is talking about when he calls himself a sly old fox."

Just twenty minutes afterward, when Dick was wiping the dirt from his face, with the assistance of a public fountain, he was startled by a heavy step, and almost immediately felt a hand on his arm.

"I guess you're the chappy," said a gruff voice, and the boy detective was jerked back

in the fountain by a six-foot policeman, who seemed to take delight in the exploit.

"What am I wanted for?" queried Dick.

"For assault. Can't you keep your head without jumping every boy you see, just because he happens to wear good clothes? You're the chappy I'm looking for. He'll come down and identify you when we send him word."

"Who will?"

"Kingdon, the broker. He's the gentleman what laid in the complaint. He says his boy didn't want to, but he wasn't going to let the affair pass."

Through Dick's bewildered brain there ran one happy thought while he was marched away by the stalwart officer.

He would get to meet Carlos Kingdon after all. He would seek a private interview with him at the station-house, and would tell him the story of Wat Waffles's conspiracy as he had picked it up, link by link, until the chain was about complete.

It did not take the policeman long to land his charge at the nearest station, where the charge of assault was placed opposite his name, and he was remanded to a cell.

"When shall I see Carlos Kingdon?" asked Dick, stopping and addressing the lieutenant in charge.

"Not before to-morrow," was the reply. "We sha'n't trouble the gentleman to-night." And Dick, somewhat disappointed, was locked up.

CHAPTER XVI.

SET FREE.

WHILE the boy detective of the docks was occupying the hard pallet of the station-house cell, another prisoner in a different part of the city was being released.

This was Mother Scammon, who, as we have seen, had been arrested for the murder of Pappy Powder. Cid Cuyler, the detective who had caused her detention came around to the station about the time of Dick's occupancy of his cell and asked for her release.

He stated that a mistake had been committed, that there was really no evidence against the woman, and she was accordingly set free.

Mother Scammon left the station-house in an outburst of indignation.

It was past midnight, and the streets in the vicinity were deserted, but for all this, Cuyler, the detective, was watching her.

"My ruse may fail," said he to himself. "We have to resort to some queer schemes to catch a fox. I've lost Wat Waffles, who almost choked me to death in Pappy Powder's deserted trap a short time ago, and I want Mother Scammon to lead me to his last haunt."

When the woman started off of course she had Cuyler at her heels.

If the detective had dreamed of the misfortune which had overtaken Dick Doan he might have turned aside long enough to have gone to the boy's rescue, but instead he followed up the quarry he had started afresh.

Mother Scammon led the detective to the lodgings which Waffles vacated immediately after his tussle with Dick and the chair. Of course she did not find the fellow there.

When she came down-sairs with a disappointed look on her face, she stood undecided on the sidewalk for a few moments.

Cid Cuyler watched her still.

All at once she started toward the wharf.

"Going back to the Nest, eh?" mentally exclaimed the detective. "If you find Mollie there, you may do the girl violence. I shall not be far off, Mother Scammon. Mollie, as Dick's friend, is worth her weight in gold. You shall not harm her."

The detective managed to cross on the same boat that carried Mother Scammon, and without being seen by her roving eyes.

She went straight to the old house from the wharf, and Cuyler saw her enter.

"Back again!" exclaimed the woman, shutting the door behind her. "If I had that detective here I'd sink my fingers into his throat, just to see him squirm. Me kill Pappy Powder! For once the bloodhound got on the wrong scent. Who did kill the old man? I'd like to know, for the killer did me a service. Where's the girl?"

She went from room to room, but Mollie was not to be found.

"Somebody has helped her out of the chair. Was it the detective who took my key at the station-house? He has been here. Now, if they found and rescued the young rat in the trap, the jig is up!"

Mother Scammon went to the dark room

through a trap in which Dick o' the Docks had tumbled into the cellar.

She opened the door in the floor, and searched the cellar with a lamp.

It was empty, of course.

"I must find Wat!" said she, drawing back with a blanched face. "If I can reach him no other way I will go to Tony. He ought to know his whereabouts. The case is desperate. Dick at large, and a new detective in the game! I wonder if Wat doesn't think that the golden stakes are slipping through his fingers?"

Daylight broke over the sister cities on the two great rivers.

It found Mother Scammon on her way back to New York, and by the time the sun had scaled the horizon, and was gilding the spires of Gotham, she was eagerly watching a certain house in an aristocratic quarter.

Mother Scammon had a good deal of patience, for hour after hour passed without bringing her any reward.

At length she saw the front door of Carlos Kingdon's house open and Tony come out.

The boy looked around and came toward the Park, probably for his morning walk. He was eyed like a hawk by Margaret Scammon.

In a strip of warm morning sunshine Tony took a seat on one of the benches, and drew his cigarette case. As he lit one of the fragrant smokes, he saw Mother Scammon coming toward him with eagerness written all over her face.

"This is against orders," exclaimed Tony, with a frown. "You weren't to bother me at all."

Margaret Scammon's face instantly grew dark.

"I don't care what you think," said she. "I guess I have a right to speak to you. If I haven't I don't know who has."

Tony affected to smile.

"Do you want to know how I am getting along?" he asked.

"No. I want to find Wat Waffles."

"I don't know where he is."

"I must know," answered Mother Scammon.

"I wish I knew. I'm in a pickle."

"How so?"

"I had a bout with a young spy last night. We clinched on the steps and had it up and down until Carlos Kingdon tore us apart. I was getting the best of my enemy when we were separated. A few more blows and I do believe I would have finished him. Now the spy is under arrest for assault and Kingdon is going down to the station to identify and prosecute him. You see, I don't want the case to go any further. I don't want Carlos Kingdon to have a talk with the boy now locked up. He knows something—too much, I'm afraid. Besides, Clarice had a long talk with him in the library this morning."

"With whom?"

"Carlos Kingdon, of course. I don't know what passed between them, but it'll take a good deal to turn him against me. I'd like to see Wat. He's to meet me here at nine to-night, but there's no telling what will happen between now and then."

Mother Scammon was silent for a moment.

"Will Kingdon go to his office first?"

"Yes. He always does that, no matter what other business demands his attention."

"He must not see the boy at the station-house."

"Of course not. That is why I'd like to see Wat just now. He could lay a slick plan with his cute head. I thought you would have silenced that boy before this. Wat gave me to understand so."

Mother Scammon smiled faintly.

"I thought we had," said she. "My arrest spoiled the whole play."

"Your arrest?" echoed Tony falling back and staring at her.

"Yes."

"What did they nab you for?"

"For murder."

Tony muttered an exclamation of horror.

"Who's been killed?" he exclaimed.

"Pappy Powder."

"Oh, yes, the papers have told me that."

"We had the boy—the dock-ferret—in a trap, but the detective who arrested me doubtless released him."

"And made it possible for him to play the spy on me!" cried Tony. "He played a right slick game, too. He found out that I'd been back to Uncle Noll's Nest since the time Wat took me up in Jersey according to the story—"

"Why didn't you watch your tongue?" broke forth Mother Scammon with a scowl.

"He completely hoodwinked me and that's

why I tackled him last night. Now don't you think we must see Wat?"

"Ay, he must be hunted down!" cried the woman. "But first Carlos Kingdon must be kept from the station-house while the boy is there. If he isn't present by noon the youngster will be sent to the Island and then we can rearrange our cards. How do you come on in your new quarters?"

"Pretty well, but I don't like 'em," said Tony, shrugging his shoulders. "I can't go where I'd like to go. I haven't got the right sort o' blood in me to be a rich man's heir. I'll choke the girl one o' these days!"

"Clarice?"

"Yes. She is too suspicious. If I only knew what she told Kingdon in the library this morning, I'd go back to the house when she is alone, and read the riot act in plain English."

Mother Scammon tried to tell Tony how important it was that he should hold his temper, and when the door of the broker's house opened to let the broker out she bade him a hasty good-bye and flitted after Kingdon.

"You can't fool me," said Tony, looking after her retreating figure. "You and Wat Waffles can't hoodwink me. I know where I belong just as well as you do, and if it wasn't for the big stakes in this game I'd throw off the mask and be Tony again. You are my mother, Margaret Scammon! I know it. And it is a shrewd game to make me Carlos Kingdon's heir! Thus far it has succeeded, and I'm the chap to play my part to a T. If you and Wat Waffles do as well we'll be in clover the rest of our lives; but just now we've got to be almighty clever, for suspicion is abroad. If it fastens on Carlos Kingdon we are lost!"

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE TOILS AGAIN.

DICK DOAN waited in his cell for Carlos Kingdon until his patience seemed to leave him by his finger ends.

He was anxious to meet the broker face to face with no Wat Waffles present to tumble him head foremost into a hall.

He was astir at daybreak, indeed he had scarcely closed his eyes at all during the night, and in response to his inquiries the sergeant on duty told him that Kingdon would "drop round" sometime before ten o'clock.

If the boy could have seen Mother Scammon following the broker as he went from his house to his office, he would have shown a good deal more uneasiness than he did.

The woman from Jersey City was determined to keep Dick and Kingdon apart as long as possible, and it was to accomplish this that she was the broker's shadow that very morning.

The boy spy of the docks was getting restless when he was sent for from the office.

"He has come at last!" he mentally exclaimed, thinking of Carlos Kingdon as he hurried forward under escort. "Now I'll expose one of the coolest plots in existence, for Kingdon must listen to me."

When the boy reached the office he felt a bitter disappointment.

Instead of Carlos Kingdon being there to receive him he was met by a woman in a veil who said she was looking for a lost boy.

Something about the person rendered Dick suspicious.

The caller at the station-house kept her veil over her face and talked in low tones.

"Is this your son, madam?" asked the sergeant. "We nabbed the boy last night for assault and just as soon as the complainant comes we'll dispose of the case."

"He looks like my boy, but he is not mine," was the reply.

The woman rose to depart.

"Hold on!" cried Dick springing forward and intercepting the caller. "I want to show you, Mr. Sergeant, that all this is a cute game."

At the same time Dick's hand darted at the black veil and before its wearer could prevent he had jerked it off exposing the face of Mother Scammon.

The woman colored and uttered a cry of anger.

"Looking for her son, is she?" the boy went on. "If I'm not mistaken she knows where to look, and it isn't here either. This is Mother Scammon, the person who was held awhile for the murder of Pappy Powder, the little old hermit of the picture gallery. She wanted to see that I was safe—nothing more. Why! She don't want me at large just now. I know too much."

By this time the woman thus exposed had broken away and a moment later was on the pavement putting as many steps between herself and the police-court as possible.

The last sound she heard was the boy's laugh as it rung triumphantly in her ears.

Mother Scammon had barely got out of sight ere a carriage landed a gentleman in front of the station-house.

He glanced at his watch as he crossed the sidewalk and entered the building with a quick and nervous step.

"I am Carlos Kingdon," said he to the sergeant. "Is the boy here yet?"

"He is."

"I'd like to see him. Please be quick about it; my time is limited."

Dick was again sent for at once.

The moment he appeared in the office Kingdon's eyes became riveted upon him.

A strange pallor seemed to overspread the broker's face.

"Does he look different by daylight?" queried the police sergeant.

"He does," said Kingdon. "Is this the boy I sent the officers after?"

"He's the chap O'Keefe fetched in last night."

"I'm the boy," exclaimed Dick stepping forward. "There's no mistake I assure you, Mr. Kingdon."

"What's your name?"

"Dick Doan."

"Come here."

The boy shadow of the docks went nearer still; the hand of Kingdon crept forward and took his arm.

"I don't want to think some things, but by heavens you make me," he exclaimed, looking down into Dick's upturned face. "I used to see eyes like yours but it was many a long day ago. Who knows anything about you as a youngster?"

"Jimmy Callister for one, sir."

"Who is Jimmy Callister?"

"He is a member of the regulars," replied the sergeant answering for Dick and taking the words out of his mouth.

"Where is he?"

"He won't be found on duty now."

"Where does he live?"

The sergeant gave the necessary direction.

"I withdraw my charges against this boy," continued Kingdon. "You won't hold him any longer, will you?"

"No, sir."

Three minutes afterward Dick Doan was an occupant of a carriage with Carlos Kingdon on the opposite seat looking at him like a man in a maze.

It need not be thought that the boy's tongue was still.

While the vehicle rattled out of one street and into another Dick was relating a story in which the broker appeared deeply interested.

"If all that is true I have been the victim of the deepest plot I ever heard of," said he. "It is almost more than a person can believe. Mother Scammon must have followed me into my office for she was there almost as soon as I was. She told me the boy arrested by O'Keefe was hers and begged me to let the law take its course without any personal prosecution. I agreed to do it; but she had not been gone long ere I became suspicious. I suppose she went to the station to make sure that you were there. She is a cool, designing woman, if but one half you have told me about her is true. She is a fit companion for Wat Waffles, who must be found. But we'll soon see Jimmy Callister the policeman who says he fished you out of the water some years ago. After that we may make another move."

The red-whiskered "cop" was found at home in the midst of an interesting family.

"What did I tell you?" he exclaimed glancing from Dick to the broker. "Didn't I say you looked like the boy what disappeared a good many years ago?"

Dick merely looked at Kingdon and said nothing.

For two hours O'Keefe and the broker were closeted together.

"Didn't you tell me that Custer is to meet some one in the Park to-night?" Kingdon inquired while the carriage was rattling again over the streets of Gotham.

"He is to meet Wat Waffles at that place."

The broker was silent for a moment.

"We won't need Cuyler the detective," said he. "I think we can match this wolf who has played so well in sheep's clothing."

"I'll do my share. I owe Wat Waffles one for several tricks which I have not forgotten."

At eight o'clock, after the lighting of the street lamps, a boy who did not resemble Dick o' the Docks in outward appearance entered the little Park from the west.

Passing almost across the Park he turned and

came back to the center where just as he was about to seat himself on one of the settees he was seized from behind and borne rapidly toward the deep shadows of some bushes.

The hands that held him seemed to possess the gripping qualities of eagle talons. He was entirely helpless in their power.

All at once the figure of a woman sprung toward him, and before he could fairly recognize her, a cloth was thrown over his head, and drawn tightly under his chin.

Dick gasped and struggled for a moment; then his brain seemed to swim, and the last thought he had was that he had fallen into the merciless clutches of Wat Waffles and Mother Scammon, as precious a pair of rascals as ever plied their calling in Gotham.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SCORE ONE FOR JUSTICE.

WHEN the pair found their victim unconscious, thanks to the cloth, they hustled him through the most shaded portion of the Park, and pushed him into a cab which stood in the gutter, apparently waiting for them.

The cab rattling away carried Dick and his captors out of sight.

Unseen? No.

It happened—it was more luck than anything else—that a man witnessed the departure of the cab.

He caught a glimpse of Waffles that seemed to make his eyes sparkle.

"Found at last, eh?" chuckled this man, who was none other than our friend, Cid Cuyler, the detective. "You can't keep your fingers out of mischief, can you, Mr. Waffles, alias Betts and half a dozen other names?"

The following moment another cab, hurriedly pressed into service, was traveling in the wake of the first one. It made the same turns as the foremost one, and when Waffles's vehicle bowled into a narrow street that had the appearance of an alley, Cuyler's driver drew up and the detective jumped out.

Secreting himself in the shadow of a building he saw Waffles and Mother Scammon help their prisoner into a house, and heard the door shut like the door of a prison.

"Into another trap, but this is not the Jersey City house," said Cuyler to himself. "It may have deadfalls and trap-doors, all the same. No doubt it is Waffles's new haunt, but Cid Cuyler, the man he choked into unconsciousness at Pappy Powder's, is likely to get even for that little diversion."

The detective continued to watch the house until Waffles came out and re-entered the cab, which had waited for him a few feet from the step.

"Back to the Park, no doubt. You want to see Tony, don't you, Waffles? I know of no better place to block your game." And Cuyler started off, following the city fox as before, and alighting with him in the Park near Carlos Kingdon's residence.

There was eagerness and elasticity in the rogue's movements now. He acted like a man who had just achieved a decided success, and Cuyler took great delight in watching him.

Presently he saw a well-built youth join Waffles where the light of the Park lamps did not fall.

It was Tony.

Slipping forward with the caution of the alert detective, Cuyler endeavored to catch the low words which the couple exchanged.

"I can't get at anything more," said Tony. "The suspicions of Clarice have been imparted to him. I felt like choking the girl a while ago, she looked at me so impudently as if to say: 'The jig is up. We are at the bottom of the scheme.' Ever since Carlos Kingdon caused the boy to be released he isn't the same man, though he tries to make me think otherwise."

"Pish! they have no proof!" laughed Waffles. "We have just removed the main witness, and in a short time it will be plain sailing again."

Tony shook his head doubtfully.

"If I could think so I'd go back and play it out, but I can't," he said.

"You must!" commanded Waffles. "Why, boy, Kingdon is worth three millions!"

"What good will they do me if they prove me an impostor?"

"They can't prove that, I say," was the response.

Tony made no reply.

"You must go back and continue the game," resumed Waffles. "I'll stand between you and failure."

"You will?" asked the boy with a smile.

"Yes."

"What if they should nab you?"

Waffles seemed to start at this question.

"But they won't," he declared, reassuringly. "I've changed my nest and my feathers too, as you see. I don't trot about on my feet any more. I have a cab at my disposal and a man whom I can trust—an old chum who knows nothing but silence. I'm going back now. Play your part well. It'll all come right. Keep your hands off the girl, no matter what she does. To-morrow night at nine come here. I will have some news."

Wat Waffles came toward the carriage he had left in the gutter. There followed a figure at his heels—the figure of Dick Doan's friend, the detective!

"Straight to number eighty," said the villain to the man on the seat as he gathered up the lines.

The cab door had not closed on Waffles when a foot not his pressed the step.

"Three hundred Mulberry street, driver," said a voice that sent a cold chill to Waffles's heart, and, at the same time, the door closed and a hand fell upon the plotter's wrist.

For a moment Wat Waffles sat upright like a person rudely awakened from a nightmare.

He felt that he was under arrest, that the end of the game had been reached, and the horror of the situation appeared to rivet him to the seat.

The carriage instead of moving off at the last command stood stock still in the gutter.

"Your Jehu won't obey me, Waffles," said the same voice. "Will you issue the same command, or shall we go to 300 Mulberry by a more public route?"

Waffles, white as a shroud, fairly ground his teeth.

He knew he had been caught by Cuyler, the detective, a man whom he thought he had killed at Pappy Powder's.

Already there was a manacle at his wrist. Waffles felt the cold steel and shivered.

"Drive as the gentleman has ordered, Butler," said he, and away went the horses, restless under the whip.

Ten minutes later Cuyler left the sly old fox in a cell in the police-station.

The detective looked like a man confident of victory.

He went straight to the house in the narrow street, and his ring brought Mother Scammon to the door.

"Heavens!" cried the woman growing white as she fell back. "I thought—"

"That I was Wat Waffles, eh?" interrupted Cuyler, slipping a steel bracelet over the hand that looked so tempting. "Where is the boy?"

"What boy?"

"Come, Margaret Scammon, I am no fool!" laughed the detective. "The boy or the longest term the courts can give you!"

This threat was enough to dispel the woman's bravado, and, from a dark underground apartment which if Cuyler had not come to the rescue would have proved his tomb, came the Dock Boy Detective.

Before Tony could be detained by Kingdon, who was anxious to hold him as a witness against Waffles, he suddenly disappeared and the most diligent search failed to find him.

Waffles and Mother Scammon got their just deserts—the former for the murder of Pappy Powder—who knew him only too well for the old man's good—and the woman for fraud.

Waffles made a confession which strengthened the prevailing belief that Dick Doan was the real Kingdon heir and a bit of shrewd work by Cuyler confirmed this to the satisfaction of the broker.

As a matter of course Dick moved into his new quarters, but not until he had placed Mollie in another home.

Clarice Kingdon, who had a lover when Tony first appeared, has since married, and Cid Cuyler is authority for the statement that Custer Kingdon—once Dick o' the Docks—will, in due course of time, take Mollie, his friend in the days of poverty, to a home than which there is not a happier in New York.

One day this same lynx Cuyler thought he saw Tony, but the glimpse was so meager that he failed to satisfy himself, and the boy who, for awhile, was heir to millions is still missing.

No doubt he is Mother Scammon's son, but the woman denies it, and nobody seems to care to whom he owes his existence.

Tommy Topp, the cripple of Uncle Noll's Nest, was surprised to learn of Dick's identity, and nearly every warm day sees Carlos Kingdon's heir carrying a boy up and down the steps of a house that looks like a palace.

THE END.

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